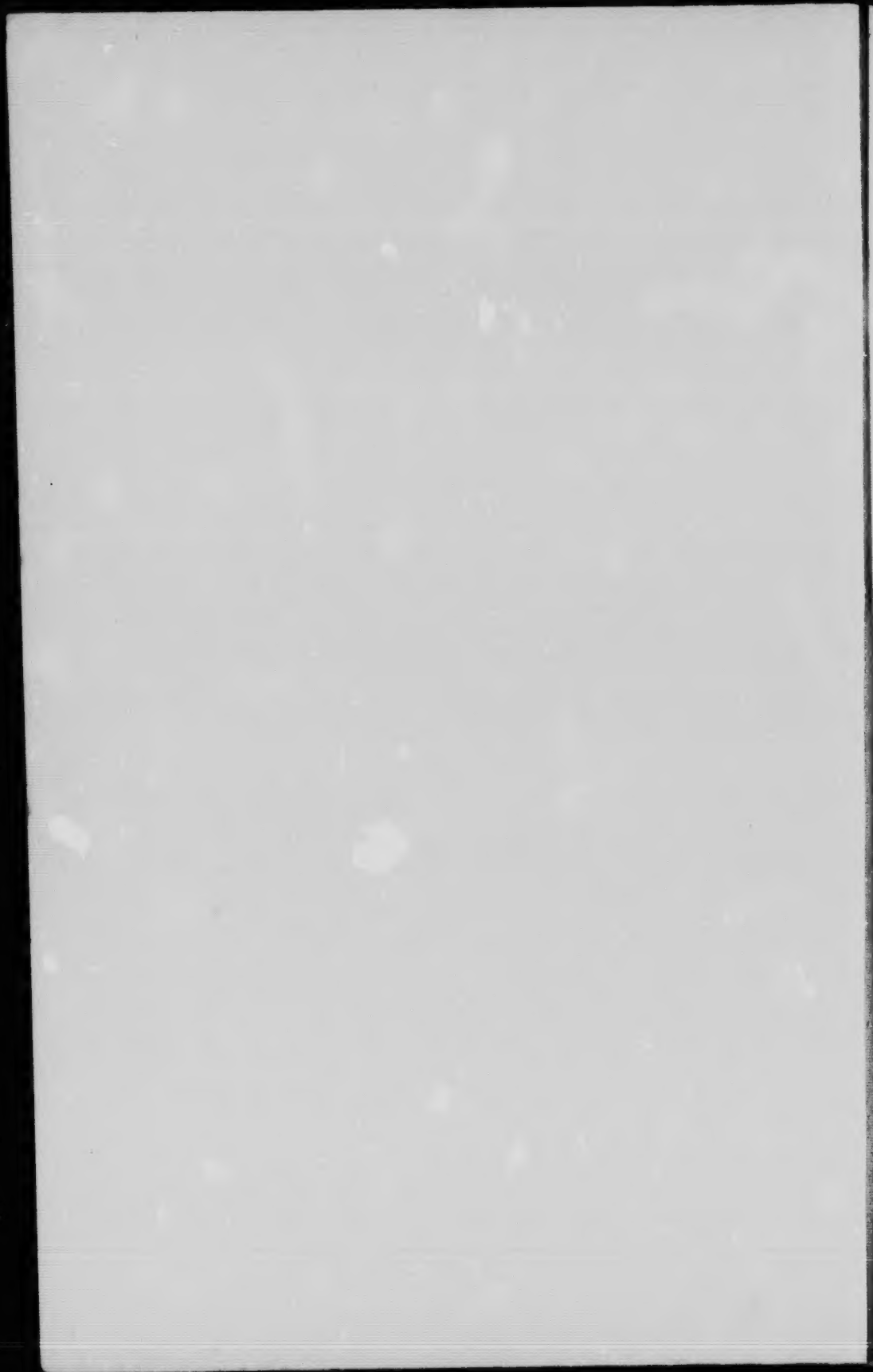


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A DOOMED MANSION

BY
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WILLIAM BROWN
TORONTO
1905

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A DOOMED MANSION.

CHAPTER I.

THE last notes of the Sabbath church bells were ceasing, one after another, and their echoes were faintly dying out over the city. A cool breeze stirred the crisp atmosphere and drove the brown leaves from the shade-trees along the pavements. Far across the plains to the westward, the sun had sunk in gorgeous clouds of gold and purple and crimson, leaving behind a blood-red blaze across the sky.

Two boys, who apparently had no idea of going to church, and who, up to that moment, had been singing, "There's a hot time in the old town to-night," had just taken up the words of the evening hymn, the tune of which now rang out as a carillon from a neighboring church tower.

Their voices, however, came to an abrupt stop as they saw striding towards them the athletic figure of a young man, who was apparently on his way to church. He was a handsome young fellow, with bronzed face telling of work in the

fields, while his easy swinging gait displayed the perfection of youthful vigor.

He was Fritz Kingstone, who, a year ago, when he was but eighteen, had, on the death of his father, taken up the management of the farm that the elder Kingstone had made out of the unbroken prairie.

"Hello, boys! How is it you are not going to church?"

"Dad's on strike, Mr. Kingstone," said the elder of the two, who had several times been employed by the young man; "he says it ain't no good goin' to church. Besides, I haven't got no Sunday clothes."

He did not say that his respected parent, Dave Helbrod, had pawned them, but such was the fact.

"Well, look at here, you chaps. I've got a patch of onions I want to get up to-morrow, so you just toddle out and give me a hand and you'll earn something. I'll warrant you're not going to school these days."

"No, sir, we ain't," said the boy, shamefacedly. Then, by way of changing the subject from his own misdoings, he said: "There goes Vaughn in his carriage. That's the man as is taking the bread out of us mouths."

The precocious imp was but taking up the language he frequently heard at home.

"Well, never mind about Mr. Vaughn, Tom," said Kingstone; "you come out and get some bread of your own to put into your bread-basket. Here, take this for an earnest." And giving the boy a quarter, he passed on.

The church being close at hand, he saw the Vaughn carriage stop at the door. A tall, handsome man of sixty, grey-moustached, keen and well-groomed, alighted. Then he handed out a beautiful girl, who was evidently his daughter.

Instinctively Fritz slackened his pace as they passed into the church, for Miss Vaughn was a vision of beauty—a fair creature with golden hair, the prettiest of rosebud lips, the frankest light blue eyes, the most deliciously graceful figure. Withal there was in her face a virginal refinement and thoughtfulness that seemed to our young Fritz quite angelic.

Is it any wonder that he did not come to himself for some time after the service had begun? He sang the words of the first hymn mechanically. When the parson began "Dearly beloved brethren, the Scripture moveth us," his eyes were wandering over the congregation in search of a hat trimmed with blue and with a white feather. It was not until the "general confession" that he suddenly remembered where he was, and admitted to himself that he had "done what he ought not to have done."

He waited at the door after the service to see her come out and get into her carriage. He saw her father—tall, portly, and perhaps a little pompous—follow her. The door was slammed; the spirited horses started. Fritz walked away to the hotel, where he had left his trusty broncho. On the way his eye fell on a theatrical poster announcing that the "Bohemian Girl" was to be performed at the opera house on the following evening.

Would she be there? Why, of course she would. Millionaires and their daughters went everywhere. Why should not he go, too, and feast his eyes once more on her lovely face? Why, of course he would. But it was only his subconsciousness that seemed to say this. The other part of him, that which had come to him from his cautious Scottish ancestry, was telling him that he was a great fool. It was with a divided and occupied mind that he passed into the back way of the hotel to get the key of the stable in which he had left his horse.

Now, this back way was used on Sunday evenings by other persons besides those who used the stables. It was the avenue whereby surreptitious drinks were procured. As Fritz stood in the passage a moment, he could hear that the bar was full of rather noisy men, whose conversational abilities had been considerably stimulated by drink.

"I say down with 'em! burn 'em! burn their houses! I should like to see Mr. Vaughn's house afire! Would I put it out? I should smile."

"Now, Helbrod, none o' that," said a quieter voice; "it's always the way when you've got a glass or two into you. That sort o' talk brings discredit on the strike and on the union. Drop it, I say."

"Oh, you're all right—you're a delegate—you get pay from the union," sneered Helbrod.

"I'm going to take no lip from you, and so I tell you. For two pins I'd spoil that ugly mug of yours."

Helbrod made a vituperative reply. It was evident, from his highly stimulated condition, where the money obtained by pawning his boy's Sunday clothes had gone.

Fritz took the key from where it hung, without going into the bar. Proceeding to the stable he began to bridle and saddle his broncho. While doing so he saw two men emerge from the back door of the hotel and come across to the stables. As Fritz had no lantern, and was saddling his horse by such faint light as struggled in from the outside, they did not see him.

One of the two men was Helbrod. "Well, then," he said to his companion, "we'll get all the chaps to meet at the Wolf on Tuesday night at eight o'clock, eh? Then we'll settle the entire plan, and if we don't shift summat my name

ain't Dave Helbrod. D—— his eyes! He's as bad as a millionaire! Call *him* a labor man? He's a wolf in sheep's clothing. I say burn 'em!"

When the two men had gone, Fritz led his broncho quietly from the stable, returned the key, and mounting his well-trained steed, was soon cantering over the three miles that stretched between the outskirts of the city and his home. He rode buried in thought. Sometimes the fair face of Miss Vaughn came with startling vividness before his mental eye. Then he thought of the loudly uttered threat against her father, and of the meeting of malcontents that was to take place at the Wolf Inn.

CHAPTER II.

Fritz rose at daylight and went out to milk the cows, lighting the fire with a deft hand as he passed through the spacious kitchen, and putting on the kettle. By the time his task was done, his mother, who idolized him, had breakfast ready.

"Did you go to the Presbyterian church last night, Fritz? Who preached?" she asked as they sat down to breakfast in the little dining room that opened off the kitchen.

"No, I went to St. Christopher's, mother. Somehow I like that church; they have a very good choir and the singing is nice."

"Ah, you take after your father, lad. They have quite a congregation there, I hear. I suppose most of the well-to-do people go there. That's where Mr. Vaughn goes, that lives at that big house."

"Yes, mother."

"Mrs. Anderson, that was out to tea with me other day, told me about him. It appears he has a wonderfully pretty daughter. Lily, her name is."

"Oh, has he?"

"Yes. Mrs. Anderson says that young Vernon, him that owns that big factory, is sweet on her."

Fritz gulped his porridge. He felt as if that spoonful would choke him. But after a nervous cough he managed to say, "Oh, indeed?"

"Yes. Well, money will find out money, every time. 'Birds of a feather 'll flock together.'"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Fritz.

"But, 'there's many a slip twixt the cup and the lip.' Mrs. Anderson says the young lady doesn't seem particular to care about him."

Fritz took some sugar and put it on his porridge, not because he wanted it, for everything seemed suddenly sweeter to him, but from sheer absence of mind.

"Bless the boy! Sugar on porridge! What next? What would your grandfather McLeod say?"

"Well, I don't suppose your father ever took anything but salt with his porridge. I like to try fresh mixtures, you see. So Mrs. Anderson knows all about the Vaughns, does she?" said Fritz, carelessly.

"Yes. You see, Fritz, the butler, who came out from England, is her second cousin. He was butler for Lord Grantire, at Branchester Hall,

where Mrs. Anderson was housekeeper. By the way, she's coming over here this afternoon. I asked her to come and stay a day or two and help me with the preserves and jelly."

"That's right, mother; she's a good hand at it, I'll warrant. I'm glad of that, for I've got a matter to attend to in the city to-night, and you'll not be lonesome."

"No, my lad—but you don't suppose I want my boy to be tied to his mother's apron strings. No, he's too much of a man for that, thank the Lord, and more like his father every day."

At that moment there was a knock at the door, and going to it Fritz saw Tom Helbrod and his companions. Fritz gave the boys a hearty breakfast, and then ordered them to work on the onion patch, while he himself went to his ploughing.

All day long, as he followed the plough and smelt the rich earth of the newly turned furrow, Fritz was conscious of a new delight, for the power of a "love at first sight" was in his heart.

"Lily Vaughn." What a pretty name! How much prettier than the names of the girls he had known at school. When the horses rested a moment at the end of the long furrow, he pulled out a stump of pencil and wrote "Lily Vaughn" on the plough handles. Then he rubbed it out. Then he said aloud, "Lily Vaughn—sweet, sweetest Lily Vaughn." Then he sang the first

thing that came into his head in a loud voice, as he started the horses back on their steady plod.

There was a great crowd in front of the theatre when Fritz, having stabled his broncho, took his place along with those who were pushing toward the entrance so as to be ready to burst in and get good places when the doors were opened. For Fritz was one of the gallery crowd; he had never purchased a reserved seat at the play in his life—he would have counted it an extravagance. Helter-skelter up the stairs he ran, and succeeded in getting a good place in the very front of the gallery, which commanded a view not only of the stage, but of most of the auditorium. The theatre rapidly began to fill, the great attraction being Mdle. Solferino, who was to take the principal female part in the opera. Even the gallery prices had been advanced for this performance. The popularity of the great soprano had been very remarkable. New York, Boston, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Montreal, Toronto had successively pronounced her the most remarkable operatic artist of recent years. The newspapers had been full of her portraits and her praise.

The musicians came in, took their places and began quietly to tune up. At that moment a theatre party began to enter the lower box on the right hand of the stage. A young lady appeared, attired in an elegant light blue opera cloak

trimmed with swan's-down. A mist seemed to come before Fritz's eyes, and his heart began to beat violently as he saw that it was Miss Vaughn. Then came her father and another young lady. Finally the party was completed by a handsome, tall young man, with strong features, black eyebrows, a thin, well-formed nose, and a heavy dark moustache. Fritz had no doubt that this was Mr. Vernon, and he felt a prompt distaste for him. He thought there was a cruel expression in his eyes. Mr. Vernon was evidently very much "gone" on Miss Vaughn. He sat beside her and began an animated conversation. Then the leader of the band gave a signal, and the first bars of the overture crashed out with a riot of sound.

Still, Vernon or no Vernon, it was an ecstatic thing for Fritz to sit there and feast his eyes on her who, for him, was queen of the world. How graceful she was! How charming every movement! Richly and yet simply attired in dark blue velvet, with a single red rose in the corsage of her gown that set off the pearly whiteness of her neck and shoulders, she looked a queen indeed. What a fool he was, said the cautious side of him, to be thinking of her! But the youthful intoxication of the first love cried out, "I love her! I love her!" and overflowed his senses and his soul.

She was glancing with interest here and there over the now crowded house, and chatting in a lively way to her *vis-a-vis*, as with a dainty opera glass she looked at various people. Then Fritz remembered that he, too, had brought his father's old pair of opera glasses with him, and with a trembling hand he adjusted them to the proper focus. The result of this optical experiment was to bring Miss Vaughn so staringly close to him, that it seemed almost a profanation to use the instrument. He dropped it into his pocket, and the cautious side of his nature said to him once more, "You are a fool!"

He was soon, however, to be brought to himself by other means. Up to now he had been too much occupied with the box in which the Vaughn party were seated, to notice his immediate surroundings. He perceived that his next neighbor on the right was an unprepossessing man of about forty years of age, whose bloated countenance bore the unmistakable marks of dissipation. He began to converse in a low tone with the man next to him. Fritz thought that the voice seemed familiar, and he soon identified it as that of Dave Helbrod. He and his companion were evidently under the influence of liquor, and they had a bottle with them, from which, apparently, they were to seek further exhilaration.

"We'll cook their goose for 'em. There they sit in their pride, the robbers of the poor. Wait till my lady comes on—we'll fix her."

Fritz's muscles grew tense. Instinctively, with knightly courage he ranged himself on the side of his lady. If this miscreant attempted any mischief he would do his best to circumvent him.

The curtain went up, revealing the stage for the first scene, and to the familiar accompanying music the opera began.

But when the prima donna, Mdle. Sarno, made her appearance, and the house broke into tumultuous applause, it seemed to be the signal for an altogether different kind of demonstration. From several points in the gallery came the most determined and prolonged hisses, mingled with groans and cat-calls.

Among the hissers none were more bitter or exasperating than Dave Helbrod and his companion.

Fritz's blood was up, and his great muscle tingled. Turning to Helbrod, he said, "Here this isn't fair play. Stop it or I'll put you out."

"You will? I should think not." And lifting his face with a look of malice, he emitted a prolonged "yah" of defiance, the result of which was that he received a smart "backhander" in the mouth, and a fight immediately began.

A lightning glance at the stage showed Mdle.

Solferino clasping her hands in sad affright. It also showed him that Miss Vaughn, with her opera glass at her eyes, was looking up at the gallery.

Fritz's seat was third from the alley-way; Helbrod and his companion sat immediately next to it. A sudden silence fell as the tall young farmer pinioned the disturber by the arms and pushed him on to the avenue of egress. Helbrod could do nothing. His struggles were unavailing in Fritz's iron grip, full of youthful vim and vigor. But Helbrod's companion showed signs of making himself disagreeable. He attempted to prevent Fritz pushing Helbrod into the alley-way; but, loosing his right hand grip on Helbrod, Fritz's fist shot forward and the man fell prone over the seat. Helbrod felt himself being propelled into the alley-way.

"Out you go!" said his stalwart young captor, assisting his victim forward and upward with his knee.

"I'll pay you for this; I'll tear your heart out!" roared Helbrod.

A policeman came down the aisle and took Helbrod in charge. As Fritz returned to his seat, a clap of unmistakable approval came from the respectable part of the gallery audience. The organized attempt at disturbance, planned, as it afterwards transpired, by an enemy of Mdlle. Solferino's, had been nipped in the bud.

As Fritz took his seat again, a little flustered by his recent adventure, he felt rather than saw that Miss Vaughn's eyes were upon him. Her opera glass was still in active use.

But Helbrod's companion fixed on him a vindictive gaze. "I'll settle you, you d——d inter-ferer, if I swing for it," he hissed, as he slunk away.

CHAPTER III.

IN the west end of the city, near the public park, stood a very handsome residence, the towers of which rose above the adjacent trees. Its beautiful grounds and shrubberies were the admiration of the neighborhood. Its extensive lawns descended in terraces from the front of the mansion, and were laid out with the perfection of the gardener's art. There were lovely flower-beds, and in the centre of the principal lawn an ornamental fountain continually sent forth its sparkling waters.

This was the Vaughn residence. Its owner's wife had died soon after the birth of his only child, who did not feel the loss of a mother's love and care till the years of childhood had passed. As an only child she had at first led a rather solitary life, and though her school days, at the most expensive and select ladies' school in the country, had opened to her fresh interests, she often wished, as she passed from childhood to womanhood, that she could feel a mother's arms around her.

As is the case with many men of vast wealth, it was not easy to tell how Mr. Vaughn had made

his great fortune, but it was known that real estate in the city formed a considerable portion of his possessions. His rent-roll was large. He had speculated successfully in stocks, and held a controlling interest in many "good" concerns. He was also the owner of a large foundry in the city.

His enemies said that the great bulk of his fortune was made unfairly, partly by robbing the poor—robbing them by paying scanty wages to his employees, and partly by his unscrupulous shrewdness in business matters, whether on the stock exchange or elsewhere.

But, said his apologists, did not all wealthy, successful men do it? Were not all thinking of nothing but the mad rush for riches? While some were successful, some were not, but those who were not successful, did they get any pity from the successful ones? No; and those who were poor, did they get any help from the rich? No; as far as the rich were concerned, the poor must remain poor.

All that money could buy was found inside the Vaughn mansion. The large, airy rooms were furnished with the most luxurious and costly furniture. Paintings worth thousands of dollars decorated the walls, and costly sculpture added its charm. Electric lights made brilliant the whole house, and not only were the furniture and

appointments elegant, but they were arranged with the most artistic effect and finely displayed the taste of the owner.

It was the morning after the opera. The sun had just peeped above the horizon, throwing forth his soft light over the vast plains to the eastward. A calm, gentle breeze was astir, filling the air with sweet autumnal odors and the freshness of the prairie. It gently crept through the city, into the mansion garden, carrying away with it the delicious scents from the numerous flowers there.

A girl's slender form was seen bending over the stone rim of the fountain, her loose, golden hair rippling in the breeze, while the sun's rays played softly on it. In her hand she clasped her hat, and slowly twined the strings around her fingers. She was gazing at the water below her, watching the spray, which glittered in the sunshine like many rainbows, fall into the fountain.

This was her favorite spot; she often came here at the break of day, stealing away quietly from the house so as not to disturb anybody, to indulge in "maiden meditation." Many thoughts would pass through her mind, some of them but half defined. To her there seemed to be a sad undertone in life, something that made her feel unhappy, yes, very, very sad. Why was she unhappy? Was not the beautiful world before her,

the green grass, the trees, the flowers, and the birds? Did not the world seem full of goodness and love? Yet some people seemed to look upon the world so differently—only as a field of gain. A slight awakening had passed over her, leaving a feeling of sadness and depression. Then her thought travelled to the scene of last night—the play, the disturbance, and the quelling of it. She saw in imagination the courageous young fellow who had done so much to suppress it. She wondered if she should ever see him again.

Startled from her reverie by one of the gardeners, who had commenced his day's work in the garden, she slowly rose, and placing her hat on her head, somewhat wearily strolled indoors. Her heart was very sad as she entered the breakfast-room, where sat her father, in a comfortable arm-chair, with a newspaper in his hand. As she entered, he put the paper down and glanced toward her.

"Why, what time did you rise this morning, Lily?" he asked.

She glanced quickly at him, for there was a touch of surprise in his tone.

"My usual time, rather," she quietly answered.

"I should have thought," he said, "that going to bed so late at night you would not need to rise so early in the mornings. You are a strange girl."

"Am I, father? But you think I'm all right, don't you?" she said archly.

"Well, well, child, have your own way," he said. "By the by, Lily, what did you think of the play last night?" he suddenly inquired, twining his long moustache around his fingers.

"It was splendid, father."

"Yes, it was indeed. Mdlle. Solferino is a fine specimen of womanhood. And how she acts!"

"A little full-blown, perhaps," said Lily.

"Full-blown? Oh, dear, no. What notions you have! Why all society is at her feet; she is talked of everywhere. What would people say if they heard you saying the Mdlle. Solferino was vulgar. You would be the laughing-stock of society."

"Society! What have I to do with it?" she exclaimed indignantly, proudly tossing her head, her eyes flashing defiantly.

"Lily!"

"Is that going too far for you, daddy?" she said, as a hot flush lit up his cheeks and an angry light shone in his eyes. "Don't be angry with me," she pleaded. "Oh, daddy, why should I feel different from other people? I sometimes think that I am different. Society seems to bore me. Why I don't know. I seem to be different from your friends, my friends, from our world."

The ways of this world seem to go against me, so that I am beginning to hate it." As she spoke, tears filled her eyes, and shadows fell around her face.

"You aren't feeling well, child," he exclaimed somewhat tenderly. "Soon all those weird fancies will vanish. Come, dry your eyes! You must not get up so early in the mornings when you go to bed so late; it only makes you ill. Now, mind you take a good long nap this afternoon."

"Yes, of course, it is our big dance to-night."

"Yes, and I want you to be at your best to-night. Remember who is coming. The dance wouldn't be worth a cent without my sweet daughter."

"You dear o'd daddy! I suppose you allude to Mr. Vernon," she said, a slight color spreading over her face. "I detest the man."

"Lily! what next? You know he admires you and that I admire him." He pulled at his long moustache as he spoke, and glanced questioningly at her.

"He may admire me, father," she said quietly, "but is that any reason why I should admire him? However," she added, prettily pouting her lips, "if you think so much of him, I suppose I must be agreeable to him, father."

"Well, Lily," he laughed, "you are a strange girl. Of course, you will be agreeable to him,

and you will admire him, I am sure, when you get to know him more.

"I am afraid that will never be," she said, partly to herself and partly aloud.

Mr. Vaughn glanced toward her and faintly smiled, but 'd not say anything. He had set his mind on her marrying Vernon, but he knew there was a great battle to be fought before that would be accomplished. He was not certain that Vernon loved Lily, but all the indications were favorable. It was with Lily, he knew, that he must use all his tact. He wondered what put such strange notions into her head. How different she seemed to be growing from other young ladies of her position. Where she got such ideas from he was at a loss to understand.

The autumnal sun had long set, and the full moon was shining triumphantly in the clear night sky. Through the city streets resounded the rumbling of carriages, hurriedly driven to the doors of the Vaughn mansion; for it was the evening of the great dance, and the large oaken doors of the house long before sunset were thrown open. And nowhere was there seen a gayer throng of people than the guests, who were the pick of the best society of the city.

Crowds of onlookers blocked the pavement on both sides of the large iron gates that opened into the grounds of the mansion, through which the

drive wound its way to the entrance of the house. Policemen were kept jostling to make a path through the dense crowd for the carriages to pass.

As the cathedral clock slowly boomed forth eight, the sound of music from the mansion caught one's ear, telling that the first dance had commenced. The ball-room, being the billiard-room converted for the occasion, was of magnificent size. On the walls hung beautiful mirrors and paintings. Some were portraits of the family, and among them was a fine painting of Miss Vaughn.

The fair hostess, Lily, was fulfilling her part admirably, and no one would have imagined that she had that morning expressed such distaste for society. How charming she looked. She wore pale yellow crepe de chene, with trimmings of black velvet and applique. A magnificent necklace of pearls hung around her comely neck.

Presently the orchestra music slowly faded away, and for a moment the whirl of feet ceased, for the first dance had come to an end. Then, amid the hum of hundreds of voices, a waltz was announced, and ere long the second dance was in full sway. Men of title and their ladies, millionaires and their wives, youth and beauty, were represented in that moving throng. Mdlle. Solferino was there, too. How queenly she looked

as she gracefully glided around the room, led by her partner, Mr. Vaughn.

Lily, on the excuse of feeling fatigued, sat for a moment watching them. A weary feeling had for a moment passed over her and made her believe that she was sick of all this gaiety. She longed for rest and quietude. In this recurring mood she gazed at her father and wondered why she did not take as much interest in things as he did. While she was watching, lost in these thoughts, she did not notice Vernon, who had just arrived, and seeing her sitting alone, had come up to her.

"Miss Vaughn!" said Vernon, greeting her, "are you not dancing? Come, this will never do! Allow me to have the pleasure of being your partner for the remainder of the waltz," he added.

She started. "Thank you, Mr. Vernon," she said, and a faint smile passed over her pale face; "but you must excuse me this time. I am rather tired."

Vernon gazed in astonishment. "I am sorry, Miss Vaughn," he said, sitting by her side, "but can I have the next dance with you?" he added rather pleadingly.

Lily glanced at her card, and a faint blush stole into her pale face. "Yes," she said, after a moment's hesitation, "I am not engaged for that one."

He wrote his name on the card she handed to him, and sat gazing at her as he began to talk about the people in the room. He was thinking how lovely, how beautiful she was. His black eyes seemed to relax their severity and to grow calmer and softer. Presently he glanced towards the dancers, and a smile lingered lightly on his handsome face as he caught the gaze of Mr. Vaughn, who swung past them with his fair partner.

"What a fine dancer she is!" he exclaimed, turning to her.

"You mean Mdlle. Solferino?" she asked innocently.

"Yes," he said, "she seems as excellent at dancing as at opera."

Lily glanced towards her, and noted the singular beauty of La Solferino's erect but graceful figure. A strange notion seized her that for a moment made her smile. She thought that perhaps Vernon might fall in love with her. It was only a mere fancy, but she hoped that it might be so. She did not care for Vernon, and she saw how, day by day, he seemed to be growing fonder of her. "She's a lovely woman, Mr. Vernon," she said, with flashing eyes turning to him.

"Do you think so?" he said briefly. "Well," he added, "if I had not seen you I might have thought so, too."

Her uplifted eyes dropped and a hot flush stole

over her face. "Mr. Vernon," she said, with mocking emphasis, "you flatter me."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Vaughn, if I have in any way offended you," he said entreatingly.

The orchestra suddenly stopped, and the whirl of feet ceased. When the dance came to an end, Mr. Vaughn, a little out of breath, made his way up to them. A pleasant smile lingered on his face as he introduced La Solferino to Vernon. Lily rose, and holding her father's arm, whispered softly to him and moved away.

"Although I have never had the pleasure of meeting you before, Mdlle. Solferino," said Vernon, "I have long heard of your fame, and I am honored to have made your acquaintance."

She smiled sweetly, showing a row of pearly white teeth.

"You are a great friend of Mr. Vaughn's, so he was telling me," she said modestly.

"Yes, I have that honor."

"What a charming girl his daughter is, Mr. Vernon. So pretty. I have quite fallen in love with her."

"Yes, she is exceptionally beautiful," he said, looking at a young man who was making his way to them.

"At last, Mdlle., I have found you!" the stranger exclaimed, in a high-pitched key, while an expectant light shone in his eyes. She turned

around sharply, and noticing him—for it was her partner for the number that had just commenced—smiled. Rising, she turned to Vernon. “I will see you later,” she whispered. Vernon bowed and rose to seek Miss Vaughn, his partner for the dance. He found her sitting with her father near some palms in a recess. Seeing him coming, she rose, and with a bright smile on her face, they joined the merry throng of dancers. Mr. Vaughn was pleased to see how kindly she was treating Vernon. He now had great hopes that he would be able to arrange a matrimonial alliance that would in every way meet his own views, and be a comfortable settlement for his daughter.

CHAPTER IV.

Two miles from the city limits, all alone on the prairie, stood the inn called "The Wolf," so called on account of the many wolves that formerly roamed in that vicinity.

It was a wooden building, and the shiplap sides showed signs of age. Its shingled roof, however, was weather-tight. Irregular in shape, part of it was of one storey, while the remainder was of two.

It was here that the meeting of malecontent workmen was to take place, and Fritz had not forgotten it. All the day following the performance at the opera house he had been thinking of it.

He had not said anything to his mother or her friend, Mrs. Anderson, of the exciting scenes of the previous evening. He had a young man's natural reticence in matters of the heart. Also he was too much pleased to hear old Mrs. Anderson talk about Lily Vaughn and her father and their house and grounds and general *ménage* to venture to put in a word of his own.

Fritz knew the premises at the Wolf Inn like a book. He had often played there with an old

school-fellow of his—a son of a former landlord—in his school days. But then the tavern was a more respectable place than it was now. Of late it had got a bad name, and was too often the resort of low characters from the growing city.

He began to devise ways and means for finding out what nefarious business was to be transacted.

Eight o'clock on Tuesday evening was the hour that Dave Helbrod had mentioned, and at eight o'clock Fritz meant to be on hand. He had a shrewd suspicion that the proposed meeting would be held in a large room known as the "club-room," where formerly lodge meetings were held. This was in the one-storey part of the building and slightly away from the business portion of the house. Adjoining it was a shed where vehicles were housed, and a loft of considerable size stretched over both. It was Fritz's idea that he could gain access to this loft, making an opening through the boards of the ceiling of the "club-room," and so see and hear all that took place.

Late in the afternoon he walked over to the inn, and, unobserved, passed into the shed in the rear of the "club-room," the door of it being open. Ascending a ladder in a dark corner behind the vehicles of various sorts that were stored there, he found himself in the loft above, and discovered

that he could easily tread from rafter to rafter over the ceiling of the "club-room."

Great was his joy to find that in several places openings had been made to the room below for the purpose of ventilation. Through these he would be able to make his observations. He silently retired, crept down the ladder, and was soon striding along the prairie in the direction of his home.

At eight o'clock, night having come on, the lights in the hotel guided him in returning to the rendezvous. Looking in at the windows of the "club-room," he saw that a bright fire was burning in the stove, and that around it eight or ten men were sitting. Among them were Dave Helbrod and his companion of the previous evening.

On the adjacent table were jugs, bottles and glasses, a dish of cheese and a plate of crackers. It seemed that a little refreshment was necessary to bring the conspirators "up to the scratch."

Dave Helbrod was talking and gesticulating with great vigor. It was evident that he was narrating something to his companions. Fritz lost no time in ensconcing himself in the loft. Lying down at full length on the rafters, he found that, unperceived, he could see all that went on. Helbrod was talking loudly. "Well, me havin' made that bit of arrangement

with the gent," he said, "an' him havin' given me the five, why of course I went prepared to hiss and groan for all I was worth. So did Jacky here, as he had a fiver, too. Then up jumps this 'ere young giantic chap and spiles the game. I wish I knowed who he was, I'd spile his face for him."

"Now, then, boys, let us get to business."

The speaker was an elderly man, tall and broad-chested, who stood with his back to the stove, while in his hand he held a long, narrow sheet of paper. His eyes, severely dark, were fixed on it, and his compressed lips gave a look of determination to his broad, beardless face. The flashes of light from the stove flickered across the white curly locks of hair that hung straggling from the back of his head. The men in the room sat in breathless suspense, narrowly eyeing him as if they expected him to speak. For a time there was silence, and then he raised his eyes and glanced slowly round the room—eyes black as coals, contrasting strangely with his white hair and almost colorless face.

"The first thing is the tiling of the door. We all know what a lodge meetin' is. Well, this is summat more. This is more important nor any lodge meetin'. They may talk about the Labor Party—well, we're the advance guard o' the Labor Party. Unions is all very well, but there

wants a few boys as is more determined than the general run—eh, boys?"

"Right you are," said one or two, rapping on the table and applauding with their feet.

"I move as Jack Weller keeps the door," said one.

"I second it," said another, and they all cried "carried," "carried," as if their meeting was the most regular and lawful one.

Fritz, looking down through his aperture, began to grow interested.

"That bein' done, boys," said the chairman, who was really one of the most dangerous demagogues that infest the otherwise respectable labor unions, "the next thing is to bring in our private business, which is, as you know, our intention to give the capitalists a lesson."

"One as they'll . . . too!" said one of the men.

"Yes, like a little boy with the birch rod behind him," said another.

"There's some tyrants in the neighboring city as flaunts themselves," continued the chairman, "as spends their lives seeking their own pleasure, while we, what are we a-doing? Workin' with our hard and grim hands."

"Shame!" cried two or three voices.

"These here pro- + tyrants capture all the money, capture all the good things, the carriages

and horses, the good living, the fine houses, and what are we a-doing? Living on a few dollars a week—starvin' on a mere pittance!"

There was loud applause. It lasted so long that the speaker took the opportunity of pouring out for himself, from a big jug that stood there, a glass of ale.

"Here's to their destruction!" he said, lifting the glass to his lips.

"Right you are." "That's the way to say it." "Nothin' like puttin' it plain," came from man after man. They all hastened to fill their glasses and to drain them with a vigorous thirst.

"They's allus stops in music," continued the chairman, "an' after this little interruption we will proceed. Now, who is the biggest tyrant in the adjoining city? Who is the richest tyrant? Who wants learnin' a lesson what he won't forget?"

"Vaughn! Vaughn!" said all.

"It isn't as he done so much that we could put us hands on. No, he's one o' these undermined, under-handed ruffuns."

"He is!" they groaned.

"Consequently, we've got to learn him a lesson, and what we perpose to do is to burn his house down for him. Won't that be a lesson? And what's more, won't it give work to the horny-handed sons of toil? I ask that in all confidence

that you bring forward any objection to that if you can."

"That's the sort of medicine for him," said Helbrod.

"Now, you may say, gentlemen, why not leave this to the Labor Union? Why not let them handle it. Why, gentlemen, you know as well as I do that the Labor Union wouldn't touch it. No, there's got to be an advance guard and we're *it!* Yes. We're *it!*"

"Hear, hear! We're *it!*" came from the assembled anarchists.

"And at the next meeting, a week from to-night, we'll decide and draw lots who is to do it."

"You needn't draw lots unless you like," said Helbrod, in his raucous voice, "I'll do that little job."

"No, draw lots," said the others.

"Well, let's have another jug o' beer in, and drink to the success of it," said the chairman.

They made a collection of small coins, and the door-keeper got the big jug refilled. As this operation was repeated twice or three times afterwards, and several of the gentlemen present seemed disposed to break out in song, the meeting gradually took on an aspect of conviviality, and more than one of those present laid their heads on the table and slept.

Fritz crept down the ladder from the loft, and before going home thought he would interview the landlord.

"You seem to have a merry party in there," he said, indicating the direction of the club-room.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Kingstone, some o' the strikers. They make a reg'lar row sometimes, but there's not much harm to 'em. Their bark's worse than their bite."

After what he had heard, however, Fritz was disposed to draw his own conclusions.

CHAPTER V.

FRITZ finished his piece of fall ploughing on Wednesday night. On Thursday morning he thought he would give his riding mare a bit of a spell galloping over the prairie.

The faithful animal whinnied as he went towards her stall, and playfully feigned to bite as he tightened the saddle-girths. Springing on her back, he was soon going at a fine pace over the springy ground. Far into the blue distance stretched the apparently limitless expanse, while to the south rose up the canopy of murky smoke that indicated the location of the city.

But the smoke was not so dense as usual. The strike, which had spread to many industries, had made many a factory chimney smokeless. The last to join in the contest of labor against capital were the hundreds of workmen employed by Mr. Vernon, who was the wealthiest contractor in the city. He was very firm in his determination to resist the demands of the men, who had taken advantage of a boom in the city to ask for an increase of pay.

Sweeping the horizon citywards with his eye, Fritz perceived a moving black dot. Soon he

saw that it was a figure on horseback, and a little later made out that it was a woman. She was riding towards him at a gallop, and was evidently mounted on a fleet horse.

Instinctively he felt that it was Miss Vaughn, and his heart seemed to come to a standstill and then race on at a pace like a steam engine without a governor. Nearer and nearer she came. He had reined in his mare to watch her, and as she approached he recognized the elegant figure of Miss Vaughn bending forward towards the outstretched neck of her horse, who was certainly covering the prairie with tremendous strides.

Could the animal be running away with its fair rider? Fritz soon became convinced that this was the case, and instantly put his mare in motion so as to cross the track of the young lady diagonally. A word was sufficient to his faithful broncho—a descendant of those animals on which in former days, at break-neck speed, the Indians had pursued the flying herds of buffalo. He was soon going at a pace nearly equal to that of Miss Vaughn.

As he gradually approached he could hear the loud thud of the hoofs of the animal Miss Vaughn was trying to subdue. Her nerve was good, and she had no thought of giving up, but her horse had taken the bit between his teeth and resisted all her efforts.

Making his mare swerve a little to the left as he came closer and closer, Fritz shifted his riding whip in his hand, so that he could use the handle of it to catch hold of the bridle of the racing animal. It was a strong riding crop of Malacca cane—a present from his dead father—and it had his name engraved on it.

The excitement of the moment banished all shyness on the part of Fritz.

"All right, Miss Vaughn, hold on tight—I'll stop him." And deftly placing the hook of his whip-handle on her bridle, and giving it a twist, while at the same time keeping his own mare going at full speed, he drew Miss Vaughn's horse continually to the left in such a way that both animals began to describe a circle. The presence of another rider and his voice helped to calm the excited rush of the runaway, and at the proper moment, Fritz slipped from his saddle, gripped its bridle in an iron grasp, and, familiar as he had been from childhood with horses, soon held it panting, but stationary.

All were out of breath, both horses and the young people.

"Shall I help you down?" said Fritz, offering his hand for Miss Vaughn's foot.

"Thank you."

What a tiny little foot it was, and how Fritz thrilled as for a moment he felt her weight as she sprang lightly to the ground.

There was a little plantation of trees a short distance off, and towards this they began to walk—Miss Vaughn holding up her riding habit. Fritz wanted to tie Miss Vaughn's horse to a branch, while he made an alteration of the curb, and made sure that the girths were all right.

"Oh, I'm so much obliged to you. Wasn't the run splendid, and, you know, Hector isn't a bad horse at all, only he'd been in the stable for two or three days and was so overjoyed to get out on the prairie—why, I never had such a race in my life. But I was tired of holding on and might have come to grief if you had not been here."

"Sit down on the bank, Miss Vaughn," said Fritz, when they reached the plantation. "I want to see that your tackle is all right before you mount again. Will you kindly hold my whip? Thank you."

"Fritz Kingstone," said Lily to herself, as she read the name on the whip. Fritz was busy with the horse.

"Do you know, Mr. Kingstone, I seem to have seen you before somewhere? Your face is familiar, but I don't know where I can have seen you—and, may I ask how you know my name?"

"Well," said Fritz, laughing, but feeling very glad that he had the curb and bridle to attend to, "the last time I saw you was at the opera house."

"Why, to be sure! You were in the gallery, and you put that horrid man out—why, of course! How strange! How *very* strange! It was too bad. You know there was a plot to hiss Mdlle. Solferino, and you nipped it in the bud—everybody thought you did finely."

"Well, I did my best," said Fritz, feeling very red in the face at these kind words. "Anything I could do for you—I should—I should be glad to do," he stammered out, as he led the now quiet horse towards her.

"I think you are quite a hero," she said admiringly, as she placed her foot in his hand and leaped lightly to her saddle.

Fritz mounted his mare, and together, at a walking pace, they turned in the direction of the city.

They did not see that an evil-looking man, his face distorted with hatred, immediately emerged from the bushes near which the horses had been tethered, and, shaking his fist at the departing figures, said:

"'Ero, eh—she thinks him an 'ero! Do I think him an 'ero? No, I'll soon show him! I'll learn him to do what he done to me."

It was Dave Helbrod, who had heard the entire conversation.

Meanwhile Fritz was riding beside Miss Vaughn with a feeling of the greatest exultation.

One thing puzzled him—how did she know his name? The ecstatic young man was too much up in the clouds of his own admiration to think that, of course, she must have read it on the handle of his riding whip. As a matter of fact, the young lady had recently been reading of the adventures of "Sherlock Holmes," and as she had her share of romance, she thought it a good opportunity to be a detective on her own account.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Dave Helbrod came out from his concealment in the plantation he had formed a cunning estimate in his own mind as to "how the land lay" between the two parties to the conversation he had just heard. From his hiding-place he could see the flush on Fritz's cheek, the brightness of his eye, and his evident delight at having been of service to Miss Vaughn. In jumping to the conclusion that the young man was in love with her, he did neither more nor less than many people have done before and since in similar cases.

It was destined that he should see another small act of the drama, for as he sneaked along the road, in the rear of the riders, he perceived another equestrian rapidly riding towards them.

It was Vernon, who also was taking advantage of the fine morning to exercise his favorite riding horse. As his contracts in various districts of the city and province were entirely at a standstill on account of the strike, he thought he might as well utilize the opportunity for a little horsemanship, of which he was very fond.

But, of course, Helbrod could not hear the con-

versation that passed between those who thus met. He could only draw his conclusions from their actions seen from a considerable distance.

"I wonder who that young bloke is that's evidently so sweet upon the Vaughn girl," he muttered.

Strange to say, he did not personally know Fritz, although his boy Tom had often done a day's work for our hero.

"That is my home where mother and I live," said Fritz to Miss Vaughn, pointing over towards the farm buildings as they came somewhat near.

"Oh, you are a farmer, Mr. Kingstone? I think that is such a nice, independent life. You aren't bothered with strikers and things like my poor father is, or our friend, Mr. Vernon, for instance."

"Our friend, Mr. Vernon," thought Fritz, with a catch in his breath, as he seemed to be suddenly brought face to face with the reality of things.

"Talk of the angels and you're sure to hear the rustle of their wings," cried Miss Vaughn, gaily, thus gracefully altering the popular saying—"talk of the devil and he's sure to appear."

"Here is Mr. Vernon."

Putting spurs to his horse, Vernon galloped up to them. He looked a gallant figure as he

reined in his horse and pulled off his hat with a graceful bow.

"Good morning," said Miss Vaughn, "allow me to introduce to you Mr. Fritz Kingstone, who has saved me this morning from a bad accident, if he has not saved my life."

"Why, what in the world!" began Vernon, with an anxious face.

"Oh, it's all right now, thank goodness and Mr. Kingstone here," said Miss Vaughn. "This horse Hector of mine misbehaved himself. He was a bit too frisky and ran away with me. Enter my good knight, Mr. Kingstone, who rides after me and rescues me."

How lovely she looked, as with flashing eyes and a heightened color she made this little speech! The three riders were abreast now, Miss Vaughn in the middle.

"I'm sure I congratulate Mr. Kingstone and envy him his experience," said Vernon, heartily.

"But you don't know all, Mr. Vernon. This gentleman is the one who did so much to stop that disturbance in the theatre the other night."

"Well, do you know, I thought I'd seen him before. You remember, Miss Vaughn, how we had our opera glasses in full play during the incident. Mr. Kingstone, again I must congratulate you—you seem most deucedly lucky."

"And most uncommonly brave," said Miss

Vaughn; "and now that Mr. Vernon has come so opportunely I need not keep you any longer from your business. I'm so much obliged to you, Mr. Kingstone, and I'm sure my father will be. Good morning."

She shook the bridle of her horse, and he started at a canter. Vernon followed suit and was speedily at her side. Poor Fritz reined in his horse a moment or two and looked after their diminishing figures as they got farther and farther away from him.

"I tumble to the entire business," said Helbrod. "Let Dave Helbrod alone for knowing how many beans make five. That young farmer bloke's sweet on the gal. Up comes Mr. Vernon and teks her away from him. All right, my fine fe'ler, that's one for *your* nob. But wait a bit—you just wait a bit, my freshie, and I'll cook *your* goose for you."

"Who was the young lady on horseback, Fritz?" said Mrs. Kingstone, as her son rode into the yard with a light in his eyes that her jealous, motherly heart was quick to recognize.

"Miss Vaughn, mother. Her horse ran away with her and I stopped him. And, mother, you can't think what a nice lady she is," said Fritz, artlessly.

"Oh, I've no doubt," said his mother, with a half smile.

And Fritz in his simplicity wondered that his mother was not more enthusiastic. As for him, he walked on air. What charming words she had said about him. He began going over to himself again the entire scene of the morning. He was rapt and abstracted. He led the broncho to the stable and unsaddled her mechanically. It was not until he had put the saddle on one of the cows and began to wonder that the girths were not long enough to meet around her capacious barrel that he came to himself.

"I am a great big fool!" he said, as he took the currycomb and began to give the broncho such a vigorous grooming as she had not had for months.

CHAPTER VII.

THE rector of St. Christopher's church had enlisted a band of workers to visit the poor during the troubles occasioned by the protracted strike. Among them was Lily Vaughn. Amid the abounding comfort of her life, where every wish was ministered to, where she had but to ask and to have almost anything she wanted, there was an abiding, restless, unsatisfied longing for something—she scarcely knew what. She was ready, to try anything new, and so there came a day when she found herself with a dozen other young ladies in the vestry of the church receiving directions as to what they were to do.

"You will find in some homes, my young friends, a welcome. In other homes you will not. I am sorry to say that in these labor troubles, a number of the working-men and their families are against the church and the institutions of the church. But do not be discouraged. Speak kindly and give what help you can. Still your task demands courage and faith."

As Lily heard these words, they roused an interest in her that seemed unusual. She had in her something of her father's tenacity of pur-

pose, and the announcement of probable difficulty, here and there, nerved her slight frame with vigor, and gave purpose to her step.

"Father, I want twenty dollars. I'm going to visit the poor, and it's no use going without money in one's pocket, and I've really spent nearly all my last month's allowance," she said.

"All right, my child," said the millionaire, pulling a check-book from his pocket and writing a check for the amount with his fountain pen. "You can call at the bank as you go by and get this cashed. Now take care of yourself."

"Oh, yes, daddy, I'll do that. I'm not a bit afraid."

Armed with her twenty dollars, she was soon knocking at the door of the first house on her list. The door was opened by a respectable-looking working-man, who came to the door with a newspaper in his hand.

"Does Mrs. T—— live here, please?" said Lily, referring to her list.

"Yes, that's my wife, Miss. Did you want to see her?"

"Yes, I'm one of the visitors from St. Christopher's church. I came to see if I could do anything for you?"

"Well, you seem to have *our* name very pat on your list—would it be too much to ask what yours is, Miss?"

"My name is Vaughn," she said, looking the man fearlessly in the eyes. She read an expression of severity there, but she did not flinch. Instinctively she felt that this was one of the "difficult" cases.

"Come in, Miss," said the man, "here's my missis. We have two little kids, and they're asleep upstairs."

A decent-looking woman came forward and placed a chair for Lily.

"You see it's this way, Miss. You mean well, no doubt, but suppose we was to call on you in the same way and ask you if we could do anything for you—why you'd think it an impertinence."

"No, I don't think I should, if I saw it was well-meant," said Lily, looking at him with frank eyes.

"Well, if you wouldn't, a good many people would," he said rather lamely. He had been visited by the ordinary district visitor, but this one seemed to be of a different sort.

"I'm so sorry you think I'm intruding. I didn't mean to. I thought I could perhaps do some good. I hear there is a good deal of distress."

"Yes, Miss, there is, and who made it? The masters, that won't give us our proper pay. They that are making so much money for themselves that they forget those that do the laborious part

of the business. I suppose you are the daughter of Mr. Vaughn at the Towers?"

"Yes, I am."

"Well, your father's rolling in money, and we've not got two twenty-five-cent pieces to rub together. I've always been steady, haven't I, Mary?"

"Indeed you have, Jack," said his wife, putting the corner of her apron to her eye.

"We had a bit 'o money saved up against a rainy day. It's all gone. We had a nice set o' furniture in that little room there, and a nice carpet on the floor. Do you mind looking at it now, Miss?"

He rose. Something in his manner compelled her, and she rose, too. He threw open the door of the room. It was empty save for a soap box and a few childish toys with which the children had been playing before they went to sleep.

"I'm very sorry, Mr. T——," said Lily. "I don't understand these things. If I could right them I would."

"We've spoke the masters fair, and we've been reasonable. You see, Miss, we have to stick up for ourselves; for if we didn't, nobody else would. All we're asking for is a rise of two or three cents an hour in wages, and it's our due, and we mean to stick to it till we get it. I've

thought all these things over, Miss. I'm not an unreasonable man."

"What can I do?" said Lily, hopelessly. "I wish you would let me help you in some way."

"I don't see what you can do, Miss, thanking you all the same," said the man, civilly. "We've got just enough bread and tea in the house to keep body and soul together, and I guess we can last out."

"But your wife and two little ones, Mr. T——? Don't let anything stand in the way of my helping *them*. Don't you *see* that I want to help you all I can?"

"Oh, you're all right, Miss. I've no quarrel with you, and I'm sure you're kind-hearted. What do you *want* to do now?"

Thus appealed to, Lily was nonplussed. To offer this self-respecting man money was out of the question. She felt she had never been placed in such a difficult position before. At last a bright thought struck her.

"Look here, Mr. T——, I know you'll laugh, but two years ago I took a course of lessons at Boston in a cooking school. Now, I'm going to make you a dinner—so there!"

He made a gesture of impatience, but she overruled him. "I shall be back shortly," she said. Here was work to do in good earnest, and she

threw herself into it with all the energy of her strong young nature. Difficulties should vanish! She bought, among other things, meat and milk, bread, potatoes, sugar, eggs, and coffee, and was soon back, laden down with her parcels.

This was better than the cooking school in which she had taken a prize; it was work in earnest. The only thing she feared was that she might hurt Mrs. T——'s feelings by usurping her place in her own kitchen, but it soon was plain that to see her at her cooking was more diversion than the good woman had had for months. Something was prepared for the babies at once. Mrs. T—— lent Lily an apron, and under Lily's instructions, sliced potatoes and beat eggs. The meat began to sizzle in the pan with a delightful odor, to be succeeded in due course by the pungent and appetizing smell of coffee. At length such a meal was spread upon the table as the T——s had not enjoyed for many a long week.

"There, Mr. T——, I'm very much obliged to you for letting me do it, and I think it shows you are a real gentleman."

"You're not going, Miss?"

"Yes, I must go now, for I've got others to call on," she said, pulling on her coat.

"Well, we hope you'll come again, Miss," said

Mrs. T——. "Perhaps you'll come when all this trouble is over."

"Yes, I will—and I hope it 'll be over soon," she said brightly, as she took her departure.

At the next house she went to she found a mother and four or five children gathered around a cheap harmonium, on which the mother was playing the evening hymn. The children sang out lustily:

" Watch by the sick ; enrich the poor
With blessings from Thy boundless store ;
Be every mourner's sleep to-night,
Like infant's slumbers, pure and light."

Lily's eyes filled with tears as she heard the well-known words that sounded doubly sweet from these childish voices. When the singing stopped she knocked at the door.

She found that the man and his wife had determined to sell the harmonium on the next day. If they did not sell it, it would shortly be seized for rent. So they were making the best of it in these few last hours. It was another pitiful tale that she had to listen to, of privation bravely borne. Here again she found the people quite sure that they were doing the right thing. Yes, they would go on bearing their troubles, and

some day it would be better for them and better for others.

Lily paid a couple more visits, gave away a few dollars, and returned home with a heavy heart.

She knew now what the strike meant to hundreds of the poor. For in the two other small homes she called at, the people who occupied them had not been so well prepared to face the difficulties of the bad times, and when the strike had lasted a week they were at the end of their tether. Here she saw starvation staring parents and children in the face, and was conscious of that hopelessness which is always the worst thing in the world for those in trouble.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was getting late. It was already past the hour at which they usually breakfasted at the mansion. Mr. Vaughn was patiently waiting in the morning-room for his daughter, before sitting down to breakfast. He never breakfasted without her. He was reading the daily newspaper as a means to while away the time, and was interested in a rather lengthy article on himself. It was a brief account of how the clever and shrewd millionaire made his vast wealth. He smiled as he read it, for it pleased him. But he did not read between the lines that in making his wealth he robbed the hundreds of his employees.

Lily had slept well, and with the elasticity of youth had somewhat overcome the sadness of spirit that had been hers when she returned from her district visiting. The consciousness of having been of benefit to others, and having tried to do her best to comfort them, gave her an unwonted feeling of pleasure.

Her father looked up somewhat sternly from his paper. "Come, come, Lily—you are late." He touched the bell and the obsequious butler made his appearance with his tray.

"Yes, I am late, I'm so sorry," said Lily. "I got rather excited yesterday, and I suppose it was the reaction that made me sleep longer than usual."

"Ah—you were out slumming. I had to go out to dinner last night and I dressed at the club, so I did not see you. How did you get on, Mrs. Dorcas?"

"Now you needn't make fun of me. I got on as well as could be expected. But oh, father, I'm sure there is something wrong in things. The effects of this dreadful strike are very sad among the poor."

"Well, it's their own fault," said the millionaire, abruptly. "Why don't they come back to work and have their wages as usual?"

"Well, I'm not much at argument, daddy, but I want to ask you a question. What would you do if somebody wanted you to sell him, say, one of your city lots for \$1,000, when you had told him that your price was \$1,200?"

"I should probably tell him to go to blazes."

"Exactly, papa! Now then, the only thing these working-men have to sell is their labor, and they want a certain price for it."

"Oh, I see, young lady, you've been imbibing socialistic sentiments. But you really don't understand these things, my dear. Leave them to those who do."

"Yet, suppose we cannot help thinking. Daddy, I wish you would try to put yourself in the place of these poor men."

"Oh, you're too soft-hearted—you're looking like your poor mother this morning. Well, little woman, don't be too much cut up. Perhaps I will think of these things some day."

Then to change the subject, for the girl's ardent gaze had pierced his armor of indifference, he said, "Can you guess who called yesterday afternoon just after you started?"

"No, father. Who?"

He looked thoughtfully at her, for he wanted to see how she would take the news.

"It was Mr. Vernon, love. He was on horseback, and called to see whether you would go for a drive with him this afternoon. So kind of him!"

She started a little.

"Well," she said, "and I suppose you told him I was out."

"Yes, dear; and I told him also that my daughter would be pleased to accompany him."

"Father!" she exclaimed, "is it right of you to accept engagements for me without my consent? I hardly think so. How did you know that I had not an engagement for this afternoon? However, I happened to be out," he added, noticing a certain look.

as you have accepted for me, I suppose there is nothing to do but to go."

"Lily," he said, "do you think I want you to go if you do not care to? Surely, child, I thought that you would only be delighted to go." She gazed out of the window, keeping her eyes fixed there for a time, then she slowly turned to him.

"Forgive me, father. If I don't seem enthusiastic, I do not intentionally mean to be unkind to you, dear father."

"You will go then, love?" he said calmly after a while as he rose from the table.

"Yes, father. What time did he say he would call?"

"He said he would be here after lunch, Lily—about two o'clock."

"That will do nicely, father."

"Be a good girl. I have a special liking for Vernon, and he's a good fellow," he said, drawing her close to him and laying his hand fondly on her shoulder.

"I wonder if Mr. Vernon will listen to me when I argue about the working-men and the strike?" she said archly.

"I should think he'd listen to anything that you like to talk about, my young philosopher. And perhaps when you've heard what he has to say, you'll change your opinion."

CHAPTER IX.

ALTHOUGH the atmosphere was cold, for there was a silent touch of frost in the air, still the sun, which was shining brightly in a cloudless sky, cast forth his pleasant warmth, making it not disagreeable for a drive across the prairie.

Vernon was punctual, for it was five minutes to two when he pulled up outside the Vaughn mansion. Miss Vaughn was dressed and waiting for him, and soon she was seated in the buggy by his side. After they had waved their hands to Mr. Vaughn, who had handed his daughter into the vehicle, and then stood on the front steps waving his pocket handkerchief to them, Vernon slightly touched the horses with his whip, and the mettlesome animals suddenly plunged, then bounded forward, taking them at a sharp trot down the road. Mr. Vaughn stood and watched them until they disappeared from view; then he turned and went indoors.

The trail across the prairie was hard, for the night's frost had taken a good hold in the ground, and the horses' hoofs rang sharply out, startling

the lazy prairie chickens from their cover, as they sped by the brush stretched on either side of them.

For a mile or two they sat almost silent; then he reined the horses into a quiet trot, and drawing the rug that had slightly slipped down further around her, turned and glanced toward her.

"A sharp trot they took us," he said pleasantly. "What do you think of my team?"

"Very frisky, I should say, Mr. Vernon."

"Only a little. They are full of life though."

"Rather too full of life for anybody at all nervous, Mr. Vernon. But you are a good driver," she added with a whimsical light shining playfully in her blue eyes, "and I am not nervous."

He glanced quickly at her and smiled.

"You flatter me, Miss Vaughn."

"No, no; you really deserve that," she said, smiling.

"Do I, Miss Vaughn? Thank you. I'm sure I shall try to do my best whenever I'm driving such a lady as you."

She glanced at him with a smile that intoxicated his senses. Thus lightly talking they drew near to the Wolf Inn, from which it happened that our friend Fritz was just emerging, for he felt it incumbent upon him to keep a watch on that hostelry.

"Hello," said Vernon. "Here's your gallant

young knight—I hope he doesn't visit the tavern too often."

"No, I'm sure he doesn't," said Lily.

"Good morning, Mr. Kingstone!" she called as they passed him. Vernon also saluted with his whip in approved fashion, and gave him a cordial but, as sensitive Fritz imagined, a somewhat too triumphant smile.

"Quite an ambitious youth, I fancy," said Vernon.

"He's a very fine young fellow," said Lily, warmly.

"Yes, he's a lot better than the general run of rogues and vagabonds such as are giving us such trouble in the city in connection with this confounded strike."

"Please, Mr. Vernon, don't speak so," she said with a rising flush.

He glanced towards her, and noticed her pained face with wonderment. "Miss Vaughn, have I offended you?" he said. "How? tell me, tell me," he cried.

"Do not, I pray of you, be hard on the poor, Mr. Vernon. It is in your hands to help or to crush them, to make them happy, to exalt them, or to make them rogues and wretches. Speak not, Mr. Vernon, but think, think, I pray you, before condemning."

Vernon was surprised almost beyond himself at her outburst of sentiment.

"Hundreds of men," she continued, "are thrown out of work, starving. The city groans with the sins of her oppressors."

"Be calm, be calm, Miss Vaughn," he said, "there are two sides to every question."

"Yes, and you look at one side only—your own."

"Pray, what illusion is this, Miss Vaughn? I am at a loss to understand!" he said.

"It is no illusion," she said sadly. "Oh, would to God it were. Can you not see the misery the poor around us are suffering? Are you blind to the facts? Oh, Mr. Vernon, do not be hard-hearted and cruel to these poor people. For God's sake, have pity on them," she pleaded.

Looking at her beseeching face, his stern features relaxed, and his black eyes softened their expression.

"I can see now what you mean," he said, with a light of recognition shining in his eyes. "You have been visiting the homes of the strikers."

"Yes, I have, and I know what they are suffering."

"You wish me to raise the men's wages?"

"I do, Mr. Vernon. Oh, please," she pleaded, "if only for my sake." Her eyes looked entreatingly into his while she waited for him to speak.

"Miss Vaughn, do not, do not ask me to—I cannot, no, I cannot. It would be too much of a surrender. Yet," he added earnestly, "I would

do anything for your sake. Oh, Miss Vaughn, I love you, I love you so." Her eyes fell, and a hot crimson flush stole over her face.

"I did not, indeed, Miss Vaughn, intend telling you to-day that I loved you," he said, laying one of his hands gently on hers. "But now I am impatient. Oh, Miss Vaughn," he cried passionately, "tell me, tell me that you love me, if only a little."

She raised her eyes to his.

"Do not say no," he pleaded; "do not crush out the little hope I cling to. Only give me a hope to cherish, that some day you will love me as I love you! I want to make no bargain—in matters of the heart that would be a perilous business. But you will help me, I know."

"I will," she answered softly, and there was a soft, far-away expression in her eyes. For she saw as in a dream that some day she might give him the love that he craved for, and this impulse was seconded by another feeling, that together they might be a help and blessing to those around them. A new spirit pervaded the girl. Her eyes were opened to the realities of life, as if a curtain had been drawn aside.

"Thank you, Lily—that is all I will ask for. Now I can wait patiently even for years in the hope of gaining in its completeness such a love as yours."

CHAPTER X.

MR. VAUGHN was waiting outside for them as they pulled up by the front door, and his face was pleasantly lit up with smiles. "Come in, come in, Vernon, and dine with us," he said, walking down the marble steps to the drive. "The groom will see to the horses," he added.

"Thank you, Mr. Vaughn. I will with pleasure," said Vernon, handing the reins to the smart groom.

"The drive has done you good, Lily," exclaimed her father, pleasantly, handing her down from the buggy and noticing the bright light in her eyes and her healthy complexion.

"Yes, father, it has been a very pleasant day."

"It has turned a little colder now," remarked Mr. Vernon, as they mounted the steps and went indoors. "Slightly freezing, I believe."

"Do you think so, father?" inquired Lily, taking off the long fur mantle she had worn during the drive.

"A few degrees, Miss Vaughn," said Vernon, lounging in an arm-chair he had drawn up to the fire. "But I really didn't feel it."

"We can't expect anything else this time of the

year," remarked Mr. Vaughn, handing Vernon his cigar case. "Come into the library and have a smoke."

Lily retired to dress for dinner, but as the occasion was not a formal one, it was not long before she rejoined her father and their guest. Sitting down in a chair close by her father, she picked up the large Persian cat that had followed them into the room, and was purring softly, rubbing her body against the legs of a chair while she twined in and out of them. Placing the cat on her lap she began to caress her affectionately, so that Vernon could not help envying the feline. There was the unmistakable light of admiration in his eyes, a light of sympathy and tenderness, that was never there before. Then he turned to Mr. Vaughn:

"I have decided to raise the men's wages," he said slowly, as if he was measuring each word before speaking, and placing at the time one of his legs over the other and puffing vigorously at his cigar.

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Vaughn, amazed, suddenly looking up. "Surely you are joking, Vernon?"

"Not at all, Mr. Vaughn., I am quite serious," he answered gravely. "I have been thinking the proposition well over," he continued, "and have come to the conclusion that we are in the wrong, and the men are right."

"Really, you astound me, Vernon!" he exclaimed. "Come, come, you must not do such an insane thing. It is downright foolishness. Why, my boy, be reasonable. What has put that absurd notion in your head? For, surely it can be only a notion that will vanish when you think of the folly of it."

"It is a fact, Mr. Vaughn, and to-morrow morning all the city will know that the strike is over and the men's wages are raised. But who put the notion, as you term it, into my head, and opened my eyes so that I can see the wrong I am inflicting on these poor people? It was your daughter. But apart from that, it is right," he continued. Throwing the end of his cigar into the fire, he lowered his voice as he spoke: "And by the gods I will do it."

Mr. Vaughn's face was a study of changes. If Vernon was doing it to please one of the many whims of his daughter, he mused, then it was a different thing altogether. At all events such a sacrifice would be well worth accomplishing if it would draw them closer together.

Lily's face also changed color as her eyes wandered from one to the other. She knew that her father, days ago, had advised Vernon not to give in in any case to the appeal of the men; and now the latter had expressed his determination to do so. Glorious news indeed it was to her—a grander result than she had hoped for.

For a time there was silence, and then she quietly knelt by her father's side, hiding her face in his lap. Her eyes were filled with tears.

"Father," she said, as she raised her face to his, "do not be vexed! Do not let this trouble you."

"Tut, tut, child," he said, patting her fondly on the head. "It was sudden and a little startling. That's all, love."

"But," she persisted, slowly raising her blue eyes appealingly to his face, "tell me, tell me that you will not worry over it, that—that you do not mind."

"No, no—not at all, not at all, child!" he burst out impulsively. Mr. Vernon bit his lip and tugged at his dark moustache. For he was angry with himself for causing such a scene. Like most of his sex, he detested seeing a woman in tears.

"Miss Vaughn," he exclaimed with deep emotion. She glanced up at him and arose, for there was something in his voice that appealed to her heart. The aspect in which she had been wont to look at him now vanished like a dream. She saw him not as a tyrant, but as a man who was great enough to put principle above pride. Henceforth she loved him, and as their eyes met he knew then that his heart's desire was granted.

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN Vernon and Lily saw Fritz Kingstone emerging from the Wolf Inn, that young man, as has been before narrated, had been visiting the place in order to keep in touch with what was going on there.

It need not be said that when he saw Lily and her animated companion disappear across the plains, a dread loneliness came over him. He knew now that he loved the girl passionately. He also knew there was a great gulf fixed between him and her, so that he could never marry her. How cruel it was! How bitter the stab! His first awakening of love was immediately followed by love's bitterness. Ignorant as he was of the ways of society, he knew that she, the heiress to a great fortune, could never be his wife.

But after this cold douche of disillusionment a purer and nobler feeling intervened. His, at any rate, should not be the selfish passion that says that if it cannot possess, nobody else shall. He would watch over and preserve her. No harm should come near her if he could prevent it. The question was, what should he do? It

naturally occurred to him that he might communicate with the police, but added to his inexperience in such matters came the thought that he must keep his counsel until he had sufficient facts to go upon. After all, the landlord's estimate of these men might be true—that they assembled at the Wolf merely to indulge in drunken boastings and threats. "Their bark," as he had said, might be "worse than their bite."

Meanwhile he had been a little puzzled by a stranger who had been staying at the inn for several days, and who, in the energetic prosecution of his business, had that afternoon been trying to sell him some historical works, the merits of which he had explained in glowing terms. This stranger was a well-set-up man of perhaps five and thirty, with a keen eye, an affable manner, and an inexhaustible flow of talk. But, strange to say, he was so deaf that Fritz had to speak to him in a very loud voice to make him hear.

"Halleck is my name, sir; John Halleck, purveyor and supplier of the best kind of literature. Literature, sir, is the food of the mind. I can see at a glance, Mr. ———," and he looked inquiringly at Fritz.

"Kingstone," said Fritz.

"I beg your pardon," said the man, hollowing his hand and putting it to his ear.

"He's as deaf as a post," said the landlord.
"Kingstone," roared Fritz.

"Thank you," said Halleck. "I can see at a glance, Mr. Ringstone."

"Kingstone, Kingstone!" Fritz shouted in his ear.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir. Well, as I was saying, I can see at a glance that you are a young man of thought. You are one who knows the value of a good book, though engaged, busily engaged no doubt, in the cultivation of the soil; noble occupation, sir; the farmer is the foundation of society. Yes, sir, and a good horseman I should judge; he would be a clever man who could outwit you in a horse deal."

"I do know a little bit about horses," murmured Fritz.

"Sir?"

"You'll have to shout it to him," said the landlord.

"I know a bit about horses," said Fritz, in a voice loud enough to have been heard a quarter of a mile off.

"Well, Mr. Kingstone, I never heard you say so much about yourself before," said the landlord, laughing heartily.

"Yes, sir," continued the irrepressible book-agent, "I am here to talk to intelligent men like you, to place them next to the sources of the

world's learning, to enable them to sweep the horizon of truth with the mental eye, and to hear the steps of the great echoing down the corridors of time. I have my abode for a time in this hotel, and my room becomes a centre of enlightenment. Look at these, sir."

He flung open the usual contrivance on the table—a sort of accordion-folded and flexible assemblage of the backs of cloth-bound books.

"There you are, sir; 'Gibbon's Decline and Fall,' 'Plutarch's Lives,' 'Creasy's Decisive Battles,' 'Hume's History of England,' and twenty others. Or, if you are fond of lighter literature, here are novels and romances," and he flung open another equally brilliant folder. "I don't expect you to buy at once; the terms are easy. A little down and so much a month. And at the price, sir, that is lower than you would pay to the ordinary bookseller. But I don't bother my customers; I don't pester them. If I were to show you the inside of this little book, sir, you would see there the signatures of the best people in the district. I have just finished. How were those orders obtained, sir? Were they obtained by pestering? No, sir. And I'm not here to pester. I'm here, sir"—here he lowered his voice impressively—"for the purpose of continuing a book I have had in hand

for some time, sir—yes, sir, I am writing a book that will throw light on the human nature, sir."

"He's a great scholar, I know," said the landlord, "and ain't he just about got the gift o' the gab?"

"Yes, he's got a glib tongue," said Fritz.

"So now, gentlemen, I'll bid you good morning and retire to my room and bury myself in thought. Got any good tobacco, landlord?"

"I've got the best on earth," shouted the host.

"What's that?" queried the talkative guest, his hand to his ear.

"T. & B."

"Give me a plug." The which receiving, the glib talker retired.

Fritz could not help thinking, that if this man were not so hard of hearing he could assist him in the troublesome problem that was engaging his attention. Staying at the hotel he could watch all that went on. But one so deaf as that was hopeless.

CHAPTER XII.

AFTER his interview with the deaf book-agent at the Wolf Inn, Fritz rode into the city, where he had business to transact. Late afternoon was beginning to pass into evening when he returned, and it was almost twilight when he got near to his home. Seeing two figures coming along the road towards him, he wondered at first who they could be, for his wits were in that wool-gathering state incident to young men in love.

Then he remembered that the two boys had been at work that day bagging up onions, for the dry weather had been favorable for getting them into a marketable state. But Fritz's wonder was increased when he saw the two suddenly vanish into a small hovel that stood by the roadside. He rode up quietly, dismounted and entered.

There, cowering in a corner, were the two boys. He saw at once that they had with them a full bag of something, and he recognized the bag as one of his own. The boys were dumb-founded at being thus caught.

"What have you got there, and why do you hide from me?—you were not expecting me to come back so early?" said Fritz.

Tom began to blubber. Fritz stepped over and opened the bag, which was full of his largest onions.

"Do you know what you are liable for for this, you young scoundrel? What do you mean by stealing my onions? Do you know I could have sent you to gaol? Who in the world taught you to steal? What is your name?"

No answer.

"What is your name—you— I know you are called Tom, but what is your other name? You must tell me now. I will have your name."

"Helbrod," said Tom, crying bitterly.

"Helbrod!" exclaimed Fritz. He looked again at the boy, and now he had no doubt, from the likeness, that he was the son of Dave Helbrod. Well, if that were the case, there was perhaps some palliation for the offence. Brought up wrongly, he would go into wrong paths. As he thought of the care which his own parents had taken of him in his early years, a flood of pity for the young miscreant came into his heart.

"Take those onions back to the farm," he said.

The boys obeyed. Fritz mounted his broncho and rode slowly after them.

"Now, Tom Helbrod, you are evidently the leader in this, for you are the bigger boy, but I speak to both of you; there are many people who

would send you to gaol for this. But I'm going to give you another chance. I won't ask you whether you are sorry, because a good many people are sorry when they're found out, and that's neither here nor there. But you two will be here on time to-morrow and finish your job. A couple more days will do it. If I find you taking anything from me, if it's even so much as a potato, I will first of all give you a good thrashing, and then I'll send you to gaol. I suppose my mother gave you your supper?"

"Yes, sir," whimpered Tom, stuffing his fists into his tearful eyes, while the other boy hung down his head in shame.

"Off you go, then, and mind you are on time in the morning."

The boys lost no time in getting on to the road.

"Now, I wonder if I shall see anything more of those precious youngsters," soliloquized Fritz, as he turned to go to the stable with his mare.

But his thoughts soon took another direction when he saw his mother standing at the door.

"Come, Fritz, I wondered where in the world you had got to! Mrs. Anderson's here, and she's brought her niece with her that's just come out from bonny Scotland! Come in, my son."

Mrs. Kingstone was proud of her boy. All afternoon she had been longing for him to come

in that this bright young girl, who spoke with such a pretty accent, and reminded her so strongly of her native country, might see what a fine young man could be raised in Canada. Pride was in her heart as she brought him into the sitting room, where sat her friend, Mrs. Anderson, and her niece, Jean McPherson.

Jean McPherson stood up as Fritz came into the room, and no observer could have seen the young people who thus met for the first time without remarking what a bonny fine couple they were. Jean, a "braw Scotch lassie," was no starveling, but a fine, well-developed, handsome young woman, of the sort from which come the best of mothers for the race. Her blue eyes were frank and kind, her features were well-shaped, her mouth had a sweet expression of gentleness upon it. There was no pride, no scorn, but a look of calm, womanly strength and goodness. Her hair, a rich auburn, with a glint of red gold in it, was evidently abundant, though tightly braided, notwithstanding which a few curls escaped to soften the outline of her forehead and decorate the whiteness of her firm neck. That a freckle or two appeared on her face seemed no detriment to her beauty.

"I'm rather late—I'm afraid you've had to milk the cows, mother," said Fritz, when the introductions were over.

"Oh, yes, we've done the milking; Jean here helped me."

"Indeed?" said Fritz. "That was good of you, Miss McPherson."

"Oh, it was just a pleasure to me. I think it's the first useful thing I've done since I came off the ship, and I'm sure it's done more to make me feel at home in Canada than anything else. You see, I was always used to it at home, and it made me think of Scotland."

"That's too bad, Jeanie," said Mrs. Anderson, "I'm sure I've tried to make you feel at home."

"My dear auntie!—you know what I mean—now don't you?"

"Well, I hope the cows behaved themselves, Miss McPherson, and didn't give you much trouble," said Fritz.

"No, indeed, I think the Canadian cows are as nice as the Canadian people."

"There, mother, there's a compliment," cried Fritz. "Miss McPherson, I am afraid you came here by way of the 'Blarney stone.'"

So the conversation went gaily on. Meanwhile Mrs. Kingstone began to prepare supper, in which she was ably assisted by Mrs. Anderson. While the two elderly ladies were thus engaged the young people naturally fell into conversation about farming, about the respective merits of Scotland and Canada, the differences

of speech, their respective school days; in fact, Jean McPherson seemed so pleasant to talk to that the meal seemed ready all too quickly. And when the cold boiled beef, the hot biscuits, the unequalled preserves, the delicious home-made butter and jelly cake had been discussed, not to mention the fragrant and steaming cups of tea, of which there seemed to be an inexhaustible supply, Fritz began to feel rather sorry that he had to leave the bright circle of home and go tramping across the dark prairie to the Wolf Inn. He was in for the business, though, and he felt that he could not relinquish it.

After supper they adjourned to the parlor and sat around the stove. In this room there was a small and seldom-opened harmonium, on which Fritz's father used sometimes to play. Fritz was delighted to find that Jean had some skill at the instrument, as was evident when she sat down and played with much taste some Scotch airs that brought tears to the eyes of Mrs. Kingstone. Fritz felt he could stay listening all the evening, but when the strains of "Scots wha hae" came from the little organ under Jean's deft hands, he rose, and, excusing himself, reluctantly left the room.

Taking his riding whip from the rack as he passed through the kitchen, he was soon striding rapidly over the starlit prairie in the direction of the Wolf Inn.

CHAPTER XIII.

ALL was quiet on the vast plains when Fritz had passed out of earshot of the harmonium and its bewitching melodies. Under the magnificent canopy of stars he was conscious of a certain youthful exaltation of spirit, although he knew that there were difficulties and perplexities before him.

Then his mind went back over the pleasure of the last two hours. He had been agreeably surprised by the sudden introduction to Jean McPherson. She seemed a strong, sensible girl.

"I wonder how it would be to tell her all about this thing; it would certainly be a relief. Two heads are better than one," thought Fritz.

Of course, he might have taken his mother into his confidence, but, strange to say, this did not occur to him. He had concealed his movements in respect to this matter up to now, partly because he felt that they had been very much influenced by his infatuation for Miss Vaughn, and he did not want to confess that infatuation to her.

"I should not have to confess it—she would see through me in a second," he said to himself.

Yet the thought of revealing his secret to Jean McPherson did not, somehow, seem to present a thing impossible to do. Of course, his love was hopeless—it was plain that he would have no chance against Vernon, yet the very bitterness of this thought made him long for the sympathy that he instinctively felt that Jean would give him. For there are people with whom, conversing for the first time, we feel that we have immediate understanding, as if our acquaintance had been for years. Jean was the first of this sort that Fritz had met with, and she had made a deep impression upon him. It was altogether different from that produced by Lily Vaughn. Lily Vaughn was like a brilliant star; Jean might be typified by a surrounding atmosphere of gentleness, strength and peace.

His head full of these thoughts, Fritz began to draw near the Wolf Inn, and saw the lamp over the door shining out into the darkness. He was near enough to see several dark figures come for a moment into the circle of light cast by the lamp and pass in at the door. The conspirators were evidently assembling. The windows of the club-room in which the meeting was to be held were also lighted up, though as he looked he saw the blinds suddenly pulled down.

Fritz began to walk more slowly. He had the greatest desire to be unobserved. He saw

another man go into the inn. Then he ran rapidly forward, keeping his eye fixed on the illuminated patch under the lamp. Suddenly he threw himself upon his face in the grass at the side of the road, for his quick ear detected the sound of footsteps on the road behind him. Scarcely breathing, he heard them approach nearer and nearer and pass by him. As his eyes were now accustomed to the diffused light, occasioned not only by the lights of the inn, but by the starlight and the reflection of the lights from the city, he was able to make out dimly the form of the man who thus passed him, and from his general appearance he thought it might be Dave Helbrod. He was certain of it a second afterwards, when the man broke out talking to himself. But Fritz still remained quiet, and he was glad he did so, for fifty yards behind the first man came a smaller figure with a peculiar limp in its gait, that he knew at once to be Tom Helbrod.

But why should the boy be there at this time of night and apparently shadowing his father? The mystery seemed to be growing deeper with every turn of affairs.

Waiting until Helbrod had passed into the inn, Fritz rose and made a rapid circuit over the open land to the right, until he came opposite to the back of the inn. He then ran quickly for-

ward and gained the shelter of the shed, from which access was gained to the loft. Noiselessly climbing the ladder, and stepping over from joist to joist to where the light from the room below shot up through the ventilators and made queer patches on the under side of the shingling of the roof, he laid down his riding whip and stretched himself out at full length to see and hear what was going on.

There were but seven men in the room below, including the one who kept the door, and who, as Fritz looked, came and took his seat at the table, at the head of which sat Grant, the white-bearded old demagogue. But the arrangements for conviviality were even more extensive than before, for, in addition to the stereotyped crackers and cheese, there was a dish containing a quantity of cold meat cut up into chunks, a loaf of bread, two large jugs of beer, and a bottle of whiskey. The latter the chairman took, and poured a small glassful out for each man and one for himself.

"Now, brethren of the advance guard," said he. "Here's to the concession made to us by Vernon, and may it be the first of many others made to the cause of Labor."

"Hear, hear," said the men, emptying their glasses.

"I'm coming to the business of this evening, brethren. We have first to say a word respecting

the raise which has been granted by Vernon & Co., and which has resulted in between 600 and 700 men going back to work. I say, gents of the advance guard, that this is owing, more than a little—yes, gents, more than a little—to our efforts. You know very well that when we've been attending the meetings of the Union, we've allus gone the whole hog. No half measures for us, gents."

"Hear, hear." "Not a one." "No use for 'em," came from those round the table.

"We've stiffened the backbones of our representatives. Moreover, brethren"—here the speaker lowered his voice dramatically—"don't you think that these 'ere tyrants began to suspect we might do something. We've sent 'em a 'nonymous letter or two, eh, gents? They began to tremble in their shoes, eh, gents?"

"They did!" "You bet they trembled."

"Another round, gents." The chairman poured some whiskey into his glass and passed the bottle to the man next him. "Here's to the gradual education of the tyrant capitalists to the rights of Labor!" he said.

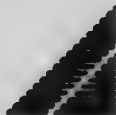
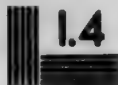
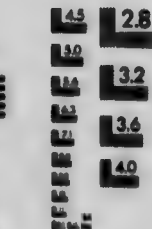
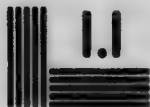
"By all the means in our power," "Give it to 'em hot and then taper it down as they grows better," the men said, as they drank the toast.

"This is all very well," said Dave Helbrod, "but this isn't exactly what we've met for to-



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night. I understood as we'd decided to burn Vaughn's house, that's what I understood, and we was to draw lots as to who was to do the deed. This 'ere raise made by Vernon hasn't anything to do with Vaughn."

"Yes, it has, Mr. Helbrod," said the chairman; "this afternoon he's met his men half way and they've gone in."

"What's half way?" sneered Helbrod, with contempt; "what's half way when he's been gatherin' in our money for years and years. He gives a few cents on the dollar to us and thinks he's doin' splendid. If we're an advance guard, let's be an advance guard, I say."

Then ensued a long wrangle about the effect of the raise allowed by Vernon, and the fact that Mr. Vaughn had also made a concession to the men employed at his foundry. The argument wandered from one man to another in an increasingly vague way; every now and again one of them would introduce a subject having no reference to the matter in hand, but which would be as a red rag to a bull to some other speaker, who would at once begin to endeavor to silence his opponent by loud assertions. The rule of only one man speaking at a time was by no means observed, and it was only by the pauses occasioned by the circulation of the big beer jugs and the application of the men to the refreshments that Fritz was able to keep any track of what

was going on below him, so far as the sense of it was concerned. He saw, however, that Helbrod was coming more and more under the influence of liquor. He noticed that that particular conspirator had placed by the side of his chair a small bundle tied up in a red handkerchief. Helbrod now lifted this and said: "This is it, gents, this is it!"

"Well, what is it?" said one of the men, drunkenly.

"Never you mind—see?—never you mind," replied Helbrod.

Fritz saw the man who had made the enquiry make a snatch at the bundle, but Helbrod was too quick for him. Then there was pushing and struggling, and another man got hold of it, and opening the folds of the handkerchief looked into it.

"Why, it's nothing but a bit o' kindling and some old sacking! You're off yer bloomin' nut!" he cried.

"I know what I know—give me my bundle—your brainsh like mud, my brainsh is good, I tell yer," said Helbrod, recovering his property again and lurching into a chair. "Pearsh me, Mist' Chairm'n, too much beer, not 'nough 'tenshn t' bishness. Why don' keep order, Mist' Chairm'n, eh?"

Here another man began to sing "Rule Britannia," in stentorian tones, and filling their glasses

and waving them rather uncertainly, they joined in, "Britons never, nev-er, nev-er shall be slaves"—all but Helbrod, who, clasping his bundle to his chest with one hand, emphasized his drunken remarks with the other. "No cas' lotsh, no burnin' Vaughnsh housh, no nothin'—call this 'vance guard, Mist' Chairm'n, why don' cas' lotsh—'swat I wanter know."

No notice, however, was taken of these ejaculations, either by the chairman or any one else.

Fritz now felt that it was useless for him to stay any longer. It was pretty evident that the project to burn the Vaughn residence had, in a great measure, been relinquished. The rest of the meeting would be a mere drunken orgie. The concession of the employers to the men had had its effect, he thought, and Fritz was now more than ever inclined to confess that the landlord's lenient judgment of the intentions of his noisy guests was about correct. Anyhow, he would now make his way back home and await further developments.

He carefully raised himself to a standing position, stepped noiselessly across the rafters, and began to descend the ladder, when he heard a slight noise at the foot of it. He waited a moment, and then thinking it must have been a scurrying rat, he continued his descent to the ground. No sooner did his feet touch the earth than he felt himself seized from behind in a

strong grasp. With a powerful movement he freed himself from his would-be captor, whom, of course, he could not see, as it was very dark, and sprang forward towards the door of the shed. Hearing his assailant coming after him, as he emerged into the night, he dashed across the road into a clump of poplars and low bushes that stood there, and threw himself flat on the grass. The landlord's young stag-hound, Jock, had however, heard the scuffle as he lay at the front door of the inn, and was after Fritz in a moment, with a joyous bark. He was at once quiet when Fritz spoke to him, and he recognized who it was that had made such a speedy dash from the premises. Now, however, Fritz saw the gleam of a dark lantern, and thinking discretion the better part of valor, he got up and made his way rapidly to the other side of the clump of bush. Emerging on to the open prairie, and knowing, as he did, every inch of the ground, he was soon beyond pursuit. The more he thought of this termination to his adventure, the more it filled him with wonder, and he arrived at the farm in an even more uncertain state of mind with regard to the whole affair than when he had set out that evening. One thing, however, seemed, he thought, pretty clear, and that was that there would be no immediate attempt to burn down the Vaughn residence.

CHAPTER XIV.

"COME down, you young varmint! what d'yer mean lying abed this late in the mornin', eh? Come down, or I'll break every bone in yer body."

It was in these amiable terms that Helbrod, who, shortly before dawn, had reached his wretched home in the city after the night at the Wolf Inn, addressed his cruelly-treated stepson, Tom, with whom the reader has already some acquaintance.

"Now, don't give me any of yer lip," he continued, as the limping boy made his appearance. "What are yer walking lame for, eh? Makin' believe I hurt yer, eh? I'll teach yer, yer sneakin', lyin' brat! Don't know why I should be bothered with yer."

"Here, you let the boy alone or I'll have the law on ye," screamed Mrs. Helbrod, dishevelled and in an incomplete state of attire, leaning over the broken balusters of the upstairs regions.

"I'll come an' put my heel on yer face if yeh don't hold yer gab," said the ruffian. "Ge-r-r-r, you young brute, you—I'll shake the life out of you." And seizing the unfortunate boy by the shoulders, he shook him till his teeth chattered.

"Now, will yer be good, eh?" Then the brutal coward made a feint of rushing at him again; which, of course, the boy dodged, and in consequence was rewarded by a kick, which seemed at present to satisfy the cruel instincts of his inhuman step-father.

"No more of yer snivelling, else I'll give yer summat fer. Here's ten cents, that's all you'll get for papers this morning, and if you ain't back with thirty cents by nine o'clock I'll break every bone in yer body—so you know what you've got to trust to—see? Off you go! and sharp, or I'll hasten yeh!"

Tom was back at nine o'clock with the money, for fortunately he had no difficulty in selling that morning all his papers. He had also received ten cents for one newspaper, which had enabled him to get a cup of coffee and a hunk of bread, so that on the whole he was in much better spirits than when he started out.

On receiving the thirty cents his step-father immediately adjourned to the saloon opposite.

"Chop me a bit o' wood, Tommy, there's a good lad, and then come in and have a bit o' brekfus' I've saved for yeh. When I take this bit o' washin' home I'll keep a bit out on it for y'r papers. I won't let *him* have it all," said his mother as she went on with her ironing. For

Mrs. Helbrod's washing and ironing was the principal source of the family income.

Tom went out to the shed to get the wood, and as the autumn sun had now risen and illuminated to some extent even its dark interior, his sharp young eyes caught sight, on a shelf at one side, of that same enigmatical bundle, make up in an old red handkerchief, with which the reader is already familiar. It excited even more curiosity in Tom than it had in the minds of the habitués of the Wolf, and, standing on an old box, he reached it down and was soon examining its contents.

"What's the old 'un up to now?" he murmured as he opened it. "Well, I'm blowed—nothin' but kindlin' an' old sackin'—soaked in coal ile, though," he continued, touching it and then smelling his fingers. "P'raps he's got another job at ingin drivin' an' this is to light the fire i' the boiler. I wisht, if he has, he'd take me with him. I *do* like ingins," soliloquized Tom, as he tied up the bundle again and replaced it.

While he was eating the bread and butter and drinking the tea she set before him, his mother finished her ironing, and wrapping up the completed laundry in a neat bundle, she set off to take it home. Pending her return, Tom busied himself by beginning the construction of a catapult

that should be more effective in propelling missiles at the cats of the neighborhood, not to mention the birds, than any he had yet possessed.

Nevertheless, neither the engrossing character of the manufacturing industry, nor that of a perambulating salesman of newspapers in which his afternoon was somewhat lazily passed, prevented his mind from occasionally dwelling on the bundle made up in the old red handkerchief in the wood-shed. The idea that his step-father was going to take up again his former occupation of an engine-driver, gained an increasing hold upon his mind. He felt that he could put up with a downright thrashing occasionally if only his father would let him remain now and then in close proximity to so interesting a piece of machinery as a steam engine.

Then, suddenly coming to himself after these fine dreams, the boy called out: "Great Scott! why that's the bundle I seen him get at Kingstone's farm when I was doin' the detective act after him. And you bet your bottom dollar I'm going to do a bit more detective work."

Then, after a pause, he said, "I wish I'd got a revolver."

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN our friend Fritz awoke on the morning after his strange adventure at the Wolf Inn, it was with a comfortable feeling of security both with regard to the murderous scheming of the "advance guard," as they called themselves, and also as to the fact of his own identity having remained unknown to the man who had endeavored to seize him when he descended from the loft over the club-room. The only being that knew who it was that made such a sudden exit was the dog, and that faithful animal could not tell anybody.

All the same, the more he thought of the circumstances the stranger it appeared. Even while he sat at breakfast it made him somewhat absent-minded, and his mother, good soul, mistakenly attributed his condition to the impression that Jean McPherson had made upon his susceptible mind.

That he did devote some thought to that charming girl, when once he got out on to the farm, is an undoubted fact. Indeed, he made up his mind that he would unburden himself to her on the first opportunity, and when he heard from his mother that Mrs. Anderson and her niece

were to pay them another visit on Friday afternoon, he hoped that there would be a chance for Jean and himself to have a little quiet conversation together.

The visit, however, was not destined to have any such desirable development. Mrs. Kingstone, notable housekeeper as she was, had set her mind on getting ready for the winter two or three of those warmly-quilted "comforters" which afford such a defence to the sleeper on the wintry prairies, when he stretches out his tired limbs upon his bed and seeks a night's repose. She had several of these patch-work arrangements in progress, and the advent of Mrs. Anderson and her niece was an unparalleled opportunity of completing them.

Accordingly, when from time to time Fritz managed to make an errand into the house, he saw patchwork and old blankets and sheets and the big quilting frame taking up the entire position, while the ladies, each armed with a long needle and thread, were "quilting" as though their lives depended upon their exertions.

"I don't think I shall be able to help you with the cows to-night, Mr. Kingstone," said Jean, when Fritz had at last come in on the forlorn hope of taking her out with him for that purpose, and milk-can in hand, had looked into the sitting room.

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Kingstone, "Fritz will have to do the milking by himself to-night."

"It's a good thing you are such a good milker—you don't have to depend on the ladies," cackled Mrs. Anderson.

The quilting was finished even when Fritz, having milked the cows, carried in the two big cans of milk to the dairy, and though he dawdled over his various afternoon chores, in perhaps not the best of tempers, the supper was not quite ready when, having finished them all, he indulged in a wash, put on another coat and came into the big kitchen to see how things were progressing. The evening meal was, however, soon spread, and Jean had another opportunity of contrasting a Canadian board of plenty with the more sparing provision that she had been accustomed to at home.

"It seems to me, Mrs. Kingstone, that every day is a feast with you Canadians," she said.

"You put me in mind of my dear old dad," said Mrs. Kingstone. "He used to tell us that when he was a boy in Scotland, it was brose for breakfast, brose for dinner and brose for supper."

"And so long as a man could get enough oatmeal and a pinch o' salt he ought to be satisfied. Oh, yes, I've heard the old folks talk," said Mrs. Anderson.

"Well, it made some fine men," said Jean. "Scotland has a pretty good roll of honor—I don't see that the oatmeal is to be complained of, and from all I can hear they made rather good settlers in Canada," she continued with animation.

"And the Scotch lassies aren't to be complained of, either," said Fritz, with a bright glance at the girl who sat opposite to him.

"No, indeed they're not, Mr. Fritz—the Scotch lassies will do their part in whatever country they go to," she replied.

"What do you think of this country, so far as you have seen it, Miss Jean—it doesn't come up to Scotland, of course?" said Fritz in a tone of banter.

"Well, not quite, Mr. Fritz. I seem to weary for the mountains. All about here it seems to be as flat as a table."

"Oh, we've got mountains enough if you go west—why, we've got more mountains in Canada than there are in any country in the world. But there, you can't farm on mountains, Miss Jean, and you can't live on nothing but scenery. I like scenery well enough, though I've never seen much but prairie, except in these stereopticon views they show sometimes."

"After all, if you're among nice people you can live anywhere," said Jean.

"Use is everything," said Mrs. Anderson. "I don't want fine scenery if I'm comfortable. Of course, if you're very rich you can travel about and see things. Look at the Vaughns now. Last year they went to California, and this year I hear they're going to Europe. The money that some people must spend in travel!"

"Are we to have some more music this evening, Miss Jean?" said Fritz; "you play so nicely that I should like to hear you again. I think those Scotch airs are just fine, and I want to hear you sing. I hear you had some singing after I went out the other night."

So when supper was cleared away the little old organ was again opened. Jean McPherson had a voice of uncommon sweetness, and as she gave them "Annie Laurie," "The Flowers of the Forest," and the "Land o' the Leal," the spectacles of the two older ladies became so dim that they could not see their sewing and had to take them off and rub them. Fritz, too, was encouraged to attempt "Ben Bolt," a song of which he was very fond. After that the young people indulged in a game or two of checkers, and when the evening was concluded by all singing together to the accompaniment of the organ, "Should Auld Acquaintance be Forgot," the young farmer thought, as he indulged in a pipe in the kitchen after the ladies had retired to rest, that he had never spent a more pleasant evening.

Meanwhile, on the prairie outside the wind had arisen, and when Fritz went to the door to see what sort of a night it was, he saw that the black sky presaged a coming storm.

But what was that strange reflection of light on the farm buildings?

He stepped a little farther out so that he could look over the prairie, when he was startled to see a large fire blazing with its flames soaring up to the black sky. He heard a low rumbling sound like distant thunder. It grew louder and louder, and then ended in a dull thud. A thousand gleams of light whirled ahead, and a dark mass of smoke ascended into the night air.

It did not take Fritz many minutes to put the saddle and bridle on his broncho, and he was soon racing madly across the plains in the direction of the city. Galloping through the deserted streets, he soon came to the outskirts of the vast crowd that had assembled. Here he slipped off his mare, and secured her by tying her to one of the shade trees by the side of the pavement. Everything was now brightly illuminated by the volume of flame that shot skyward, while the vibrating strokes of the panting fire engines, the shouts of the firemen, the breaking of glass and the crashing fall of building materials filled the air with discordant sounds.

Fritz rushed on until he came to the terrified, awe-stricken crowd, his heart beating wildly.

What if Lily Vaughn should have met her death in the holocaust!

He caught hold of the first man he came to. "Is Miss Vaughn safe?" he gasped. The man roughly shook him off. "How should I know?" he said gruffly.

He saw a policeman elbowing his way through the crowd, and to him he turned. "For God's sake, is Miss Vaughn safe?" he said.

"Miss Vaughn? Of course she is, and so's her dad."

"No loss of life?"

"Not a one so far as we can make out."

"Thank God! Thank God!" said Fritz, fervently.

He stood with the others watching the roaring flames, the thundering crash of timber and stones. Above, the sky was tinted with scarlet and crimson, while the rising wind fanned the flames to a continually increasing fierceness. In the rear was an ever-rolling cloud of black smoke moving on and on across the plains.

In the midst of the uproar, his face illuminated by the brilliant light of the fire, Fritz became conscious that a man was watching him intently. He changed his position, moving further down the street to where he could get another view of the conflagration. The man apparently followed him, for when Fritz looked around on those

who were standing at the rope, stretched as a barrier by the firemen, he recognized him again. He thought he had seen the face somewhere before, there was something familiar about its lineaments. Once more changing his position, he saw that this individual was still furtively observing him.

The immense quantities of water that the firemen were now pouring on the ruined building were having their effect, and dense clouds of steam began to arise, while the illumination of the sky changed to an intermittent, dull red glow. Fritz now thought it advisable to go back to where he had tethered his horse. He found the animal patiently awaiting him, and mounting her, he rode quietly in the direction of home, every now and again turning when some short-lived outbreak of the flames cast a fitful light over the surroundings.

Not till he got out on the open prairie could he identify the man, whose appearance at the fire had so puzzled him.

Then he suddenly remembered the deaf book-agent. Yes, of course, it was he. Perhaps he had been wondering, also, where he had seen Fritz. For, thought the latter, there is nothing more bothering than to be unable to "place" an identity that you are fully aware you are in some degree acquainted with.

CHAPTER XVI.

THERE was a good deal to talk about at the breakfast table at the farm next morning.

The ladies had slept through the exciting event of the night. As their bedrooms happened to be on the side of the house away from the fire, they had not seen the reflection of its light, and Fritz had ridden off so quietly that he had not disturbed them. They were inclined to complain of him for not arousing them to look out at the great sight, and the young man had to make the best excuse he could.

"I did not want to spoil your 'beauty-sleep,'" he said with an arch look at Jean.

It was later than usual when he went out to the barn, and began to busy himself with some farm machinery that he was putting in shape for the winter. Here he commanded a view of the road that stretched away over the prairie to the city.

A vehicle was coming vards him. As it drew nearer, he saw that contained a single person, a man. He was turning in on the road leading to the barn in which Fritz was at work. He drew up there and jumped out. Fritz im-

mediately saw that it was the deaf book-agent, Mr. Halleck.

"Morning!" said he.

"Good morning," responded Fritz, going on with his work.

"You'd better put on your hat and coat, Kingstone; I want you to go along with me."

"Can't this morning," said Fritz, loudly, putting his mouth to the man's ear, "too busy."

"You needn't shout," said Halleck, "I'm not deaf now. I'm only deaf when it suits me. As a matter of fact, I am very quick of hearing."

"I don't understand you—what do you want?" said Fritz.

"I am a detective officer, and you are my prisoner. I want you in connection with the fire last night."

"The fire!" said Fritz, astounded. "Why, what have I to do with that?"

"That's just what we want to know. Anyhow, you've got to come along with me."

"Where's your authority?"

"Here it is," said Halleck, in a matter of course voice, pulling a blue paper from his pocket. It was a warrant for the arrest of Fritz Kingstone on the suspicion of being concerned in the conflagration of the previous night, by wilfully setting fire to the premises of Mr. Vaughn.

"This knocks me silly," said Fritz. "I don't

know what you're running your head against. I had nothing to do with the fire. I was here all evening, as our folks 'll tell you. You are barking up the wrong tree."

"We shall see whether that is the case. But just now, I'll get you to hustle a bit—I can't stay here all morning."

"All right—you'd better come into the house with me—I might run away."

"I'm not afraid—you wouldn't get far. No, you get ready as soon as you can, and I will just look around the premises."

The detective carried in his hand a small, brown grip. Without any hesitation he crossed to the wood-shed on the other side of the yard, where there appeared to be something that excited his interest. In a few minutes he came to the house door.

The distress and indignation of Mrs. Kingstone at this strange development of circumstances were great. Alternately she wept and stormed. Sometimes she rocked herself and cried, "Oh, my poor boy," and again she violently remonstrated with Halleck for supposing that a highly respectable young man like Fritz could be guilty of such a crime.

Jean was calm. "Of course, there is some terrible mistake," she said, putting her hand into that of Fritz, and giving him a warm and friendly

clasp. "And the truth will come out on top. I think you must have some enemy," she concluded.

"I don't know who they can be," said Fritz, "and yet—" A look of intelligence came into his face. The thought of the two men he had helped to eject from the theatre came into his mind, but as he had said nothing about the occurrence to his mother at the time, he thought it best to keep his own counsel now.

"Take care of mother," said Fritz to Jean, as he left the house with Halleck, with whom he was soon driving in the direction of the city lock-up.

When they turned into the principal street, a vehicle, drawn by a handsome team and containing a lady and gentleman, was seen approaching them. Fritz at once saw that they were Miss Vaughn and her probably accepted suitor, Vernon.

"I want to speak to this gentleman," said Halleck, making a sign to Vernon.

Both drivers pulled up. Fritz lifted his hat as Miss Vaughn gave him the kindest smile and bow of recognition, although she was looking very pale and worn, and Vernon also looked hastily and nodded.

"Well, any news?" he said to Halleck.

"Yes, sir—I think I'm on the right track," he said. "You appear to know the gentleman."

"Who?"

"Mr. Kingstone, here."

"Well, what's he got to do with it?"

The detective shrugged his shoulders. "I've arrested him," he whispered, leaning over towards Vernon.

"What absurd and ridiculous idea have you got in your head? It's nonsense!"

"What's the matter?" said Miss Vaughn.

"Mr. Halleck here, the detective, says that Mr. Kingstone there is mixed up with the fire last night—he's got him in charge."

"How dreadful!" said Lily.

"I give you my word, it's a great mystery to me," said Fritz.

"Here, drive on now—I'm coming to bail him out—I'll follow you."

"I think the magistrate will want substantial bail when he hears what I have to say," said the detective, hotly.

Fortunately the magistrate was still at the police court when the whole party arrived there, although the business of the morning was over. He saw them in his private room.

"I have arrested this young man," said Halleck, "and I charge him with being engaged in a conspiracy to burn down the Vaughn residence, and as being accessory to it."

"A very serious charge! What evidence have

you? Here, you had better be sworn: 'The evidence you shall give touching this case shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So help you, God.' "

The detective kissed the Testament and said: "I can prove that this young man was present at a meeting at the Wolf Inn, in the neighborhood of this city, where the burning of the Vaughn residence was discussed, and that he ran away to evade capture. I can prove that the combustible material that started the fire was taken from his own premises, and that he was actuated by revenge in starting the fire. Also that he was present at the fire, looking very anxious and making incriminating inquiries."

"Serious, very serious; what have you to say, prisoner?"

"I am entirely innocent of any such charge," said Fritz.

"Don't say any more," said Vernon, quickly.

"Your Honor, I beg to make application for bail to be allowed this young man, whom I personally know, and for whom I will give bail for any reasonable amount."

"And I'm sure my father would give bail, too," said Lily Vaughn.

"The matter is serious, very serious, Mr. Vernon. Who is the young man thus charged? What is your name?" said the magistrate.

"Fritz Kingstone, son of the late Alexander Kingstone, one of the pioneers of the province."

"Not Alexander Kingstone that married Mary McLeod?"

"The same, your Honor."

"There must be some mistake, officer. However, bail will be fixed at \$1,000."

The magistrate directed his clerk to make out the necessary papers. Vernon gave a check for the amount of bail, and the preliminary hearing was fixed for the following Monday.

"Well, now, you must have a lawyer," said Vernon to Fritz, as they came out together.

"I'm very much obliged to you for your kindness, Mr. Vernon," said Fritz, warmly, "but I don't think I need get a lawyer. Surely being entirely innocent will be the best evidence."

"Oh, you don't know how they may try to get you rattled. Better have a lawyer. I can see that that detective means to fasten it on you if he can. There'll be a lawyer against you, and you'd much better have one."

"Oh, yes, have a lawyer, Mr. Kingstone—they're quite a necessary evil," said Lily, with a bright little laugh. "I'm so sorry you have this trouble," said Lily. "Wasn't our fire dreadful? Father bears it well, though."

"Thank God, you were all saved," said Fritz, warmly.

Meanwhile Vernon was writing on a card which he now gave to Fritz, saying: "If you don't mind, Mr. Kingstone, this card will introduce you to Mr. Larrap. He's a friend of mine, and a very straight, clever chap, who will do you justice. And now I think we must be going.

As Vangon and I were really going for a bath of fresh air after all the excitement of last night. Good bye."

On thinking the matter over, Fritz could not help feeling that Vernon's counsel was wise, so making a note of the address, he took his way hither. After some little waiting, the lawyer came out of his inner office, and was seen to be a stout, strongly-built individual, with a large, close-cropped head and a Napoleonic cast of countenance.

He read the card that Fritz presented, and gave a quick glance at the young man. "All right, sir," said he, "I'm just going to the club to lunch now. Can you come in at two o'clock? Then we will have a quiet time, and see what can be done for you."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE afternoon newspapers came out with a full report of the circumstances chronicled in the last chapter, and when Tom Helbrod got his first dozen papers—for he had done such a trade in them yesterday on account of the interest in the great fire, that he felt like an independent capitalist—he soon saw that the great thing to shout along the streets was, “Arrest of Mr. Kingstone!”

Now, Mr. Larrap’s office was situated not far from that of the evening paper that Tom was calling, and as the lawyer, that Saturday afternoon, was busily engaged in his office with Fritz Kingstone, he heard the boy’s loud tones, as in this comparatively quiet street the boy first tried his voice by way of making public the contents of the paper.

“Mr. Larrap raised his window and called out, “Hi! come up here.”

Then as Tom came clattering up the stairs, he went to the door of his office and told the boy to come in.

His surprise on seeing Fritz Kingstone sitting there was no greater than the latter’s at seeing him.

"Why, this is the very boy we are talking of, Mr. Larrap!" said he.

"Sit down," commanded Mr. Larrap; and when Mr. Larrap told people to do things they generally did them. A long questioning ensued, and at the end of the interview Tom did not go out to sell any more papers. In fact, he did not go out at all, being consigned to the care of the janitor of the premises, an old soldier, who had his abode at the top of the building, who engaged to keep Tom over Sunday and deliver him in good shape at the police court on the following Monday morning.

Darkness had come on when Fritz reached his home, carrying with him a copy of each of the two evening papers, the reporters of which had vied with each other in their efforts to make their account of his arrest and the charge against him as full and interesting as possible.

But before Fritz could get his mother to look at them, she said he must have his supper.

"My poor boy!" she said, the tears coming into her eyes. Then she turned immediately to the stove where she was preparing a broiled chicken that sent forth a most tempting odor.

"Oh, I'm all right, mother," said Fritz, kissing her. "No flies on me, mother!"

"Bless the boy. Why, of course, there aren't. Sit ye down, now—everything's all ready, and put

away the papers till afterwards. Thank God, it's Sunday to-morrow, and that 'll be a rest for ye."

"How about the cows, mother?"

"Oh, Jean and I have attended to them, and we've fed the horses and done all the chores. Mrs. Anderson had to go home, but Jean here stayed, so we've got on splendid, haven't we, Jean?"

When they drew around the stove after the evening meal was over, Fritz indeed felt what a restful thing it was to have a home like his to come to. His mother polished her spectacles, and was soon slowly and carefully reading every word they had to say about her boy, and one could have told by her compressed lips that her occasional frowns and ejaculations how much her maternal heart was aroused.

Jean also eagerly read what Fritz pointed out to her. "What impudence!" she said.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, that they should go into all these private particulars. They even say who your grandfather was, and make remarks on your personal appearance."

"Oh, that's all in the newspaper line," said Fritz.

"Well, thank God, there's nothing to be ashamed of," said the mother. "Let the police

do what they like, they can't find out anything wrong, and I hope you'll drive us into church to-morrow just to show that all these things haven't disturbed us."

"That I will, mother, if you say so."

"I think," said Jean, "that your Canadian newspapers are very bright and clever, but what an awful lot of sick people there must be."

"Why, Miss McPherson, what makes you think that?"

"Just look at the number of medicines advertised. Look at all these letters from people that have been sick, and are now cured by some pills or mixtures or something. See, here are their portraits. I wonder they did not have a portrait of *you*." And she turned the paper and showed him most of one page devoted to the exploitation of a famous remedy.

"Don't the papers do the same thing in the Old Country?" said Fritz.

"Oh, not nearly so much. You would think our newspapers very dull. I'll fetch you one. I brought it to show your mother."

The two young people were soon busy comparing, explaining and commenting, and Fritz was astonished at the girl's bright intelligence and solid sense. There was a feeling of refinement for him in this change from the exciting circumstances of the past two days. And after

a night of the dreamless sleep of healthy youth, Fritz awoke, dressed and went out into the farm-yard with his strength renewed. As he quietly went about his duties in the early morning, milking the cows and carefully grooming the most presentable of the farm-horses and rubbing up the well-worn harness for the light waggon in which he was to drive Jean and his mother to church, nobody would have said, from his appearance, that he had anything on his mind, still less that he had to appear at the police court on the following morning on a very serious charge.

The chimes for early service at one of the city churches were wafted over the prairie as he went into the house to breakfast, and in good time the little party was jogging along at an easy pace on the road to the city. They all got down at the inn, where Fritz was accustomed to stable his horses, and as the widow Kingstone ascended the steps of the church on her son's arm, it was to be seen by the dignified look of peaceful calm upon her face that she felt his innocence would soon be established before the world, though how this was to be done she was not curious to enquire. She believed in the God of her fathers, who had never deserted her family in time of need, and she did not think He would desert them now.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"FRITZ KINGSTONE!" cried the police superintendent, in a loud, official voice.

The court was crowded, so that there was scarcely room enough for another small boy. "Where are yeh pushing ter?" said the people just inside the door to those at the top of the stairs outside. For all were anxious to be present at the trial of Fritz Kingstone, the young farmer accused of burning down the Vaughn residence. Therefore, the officials were fain, at the command of the magistrate, to open the windows, for the atmosphere grew suffocating.

That dignitary looked from his elevated position with some interest at the accused, as with an alert step he walked into the prisoner's pew and looked around him with a fearless eye. For the name Kingstone carried the stern, grey-haired man back to the days of his youth, when he and the elder Kingstone had been courting Miss McLeod, now Fritz's mother. There was no question that justice would be done, but Fritz had nothing to fear from its too hasty determination. He would have every chance to prove himself innocent if he could.

The lawyer who had undertaken the prosecu-

tion was Mr. Archibald Pottsie, a young man who had such a conceit of himself that it made him actually solemn. Here was a case, he thought, that would bring him the distinction he coveted. The name Pottsie should be famous in the annals of criminal trials. There were several other young lawyers present, and one of them said irreverently to another, "Now watch Potty spread himself," but the other only replied, "I wish to goodness I had his chance."

"I appear for the prosecution in this case, your Honor," said Pottsie, nervously clearing his throat, and gripping the edge of the table as he stood up. There was a dead silence in the court. "It is, no doubt, a sad thing, your Honor, to see a young man of respectable antecedents placed in this position. But justice must be done. I shall show you that this unfortunate young man, actuated by the passion of jealousy, was intimately concerned in the recent burning down of the mansion of Mr. Vaughn in this city. He allowed this passion of jealousy to culminate in a murderous revenge, that cared not for the lives of the innocent, so that it could satisfy its vindictive impulse. I may say, your Honor, that there has been an attempt on the part of some to fasten this crime on a section of the labor men in this city, and to make it appear that the unfortunate disputes with their employers, which

have been going on for some time, but which are now happily settled, had led to a determination on their part to make an example that should strike terror into the ranks of capital. I shall show you, however, that this was a mistake, and that this is simply a case of disappointed love, jealousy and revenge. Call David Helbrod."

"David Helbrod!" shouted the police sergeant; and that person, his limbs trembling under him, made his way to the witness box. And it may be said that at that moment Dave Helbrod wished himself anywhere in the world but before that tribunal. Setting his teeth with grim determination, he at length stood up before the crowd, giving the Testament a resounding smack when he was sworn.

"What is your name?" asked Mr. Pottsie.

"David Helbrod."

"Occupation?"

"Engine driver."

"Well, now, Mr. Helbrod, tell us what you know about the case. I believe you were witness to an interesting scene between the defendant in the dock and Miss Vaughn. I am sorry, your Honor, to introduce a lady's name into this case, but it is inevitable. Well, now, Helbrod, you saw the defendant and Miss Vaughn together on several occasions?"

"Yes, I seen them walking out together, and

I knowed that he was sweet on her, as you may say. I suspicioned that he was carrying on the game secret, as you may say, and didn't want the father to know."

"Confine yourself to what you know—not what you suspicion," said the magistrate, sternly.

"You saw these parties together on Thursday, the tenth of October, I think?" said Pottsie.

"Yes, sir. Miss Vaughn was ridin' a big 'orse. It was on the prairie, not far from Kingstone's farm."

"Where were you?"

"Me havin' taken a walk out in the country, I was takin' a rest in a little plantation there—a few trees and bushes."

"So that you could see them, but they couldn't see you?" said Pottsie.

"Exactly so. Well, her 'orse runned away—takes the bit atween his teeth and runs away. This chap was on his 'orse, and he gallops arter her, ketches her 'orse and helps her down, and they walk to jest by where I was a sittin'."

"So that you could hear every word?"

"Yes."

"Well, what took place?"

"Well, of course her was much obliged to 'im for savin' of her life. He goes on 'is knees and says: 'Miss Vaughn, you know I loves you, 'ere is me 'and and me 'art,' he says."

"Well?"

"Her gives a deep sigh and says: 'No, it can never be, for my father would never permit it. He looks for me to marry a wealthy and 'igh-born man.' Then he puts himself about a lot."

"Who does?"

"This 'ere Kingstone."

"What do you mean by saying he puts himself about?" asked the magistrate.

"Oh, he talks a lot about love and such, and says that riches oughtn't to hinder them as is meant for each other. And her says no, it can never be; she's sorry, but it can never be."

"Well, what happened next?"

"He 'elped 'er on 'er 'orse and then 'e got on his own 'orse, an' they rode slow a little ways. Then in the distance I seed a man ridin', and I could tell by his 'orse that it was Mr. Vernon. He came up an' met them and they stayed talkin' a little while, and then her rode off with Vernon."

"Anything else?"

"Then this 'ere Kingstone come ridin' back and his face was puffickly 'orful with rage, an' he was swearin' and sayin' what he'd do. 'Vaughn 'll wish he never consented to Vernon,' he says. 'I'll burn his house down for him,' he says."

"He said that as he passed by where you were in hiding?"

"Yes, sir, he did."

Mr. Larrap, Kingstone's lawyer, now stood up and said: "I appear, your Honor, for the defendant, I may say as respectable and honorable a young man as ever wore shoe-leather, who is now the victim of a most unfounded charge. I may say that I am altogether surprised that my learned friend, Mr. Pottsie, should take such a flimsy case as that of the prosecution."

"No personalities," said the magistrate.

Dave Helbrod turned and began to leave the witness-box. "Stay where you are, Helbrod," said Mr. Larrap in a kindly voice, "I want you to give me a little information."

"Yes, sir," said Helbrod, timidly.

"I think, Mr. Helbrod, this is not the first time you have been in a police court. Perhaps you have occupied the position that Mr. Kingstone is now in—the *prisoner's dock*," concluded Mr. Larrap, slowly. "Is that the case?"

Helbrod's face went a deathly white, varied only by the blotches due to intemperance, and he said not a word.

"Were you ever in the prisoner's dock in a police court, and were you convicted?" said Mr. Larrap, turning on Helbrod an inexorable eye that was often very confusing to witnesses, particularly if they were untrustworthy.

Helbrod hung his head, but gave no answer. Mr. Larrap repeated the question.

"You will have to answer," said the magistrate.

"Well, I was, but it was a false charge."

"I think there was more than one occasion," said Mr. Larrap, mildly. "Let me refresh your memory. Five years ago, on the 19th of April, you were sent down for three months for being an idle vagrant. Three years and a half ago you got six months for obtaining money on false pretences. I suppose both these were false charges?"

"Yes, they *was*," said Helbrod, glaring at the lawyer.

"And six months ago, when you got two months for wife-beating and were bound over to keep the peace—well, I suppose the lady's temper tried you, eh?"

"Yes, it did."

"Still," pursued the lawyer, "you cannot deny that you have been willing to live upon her earnings as a laundress since you were let loose upon society again. I wish, your Honor, to show my learned friend what sort of a star-witness he has picked up. When he has more experience he will know better."

Helbrod again turned to go down.

"Stop there, Helbrod! I haven't done with you yet; stop right where you are!"

Helbrod grasped the front of the witness-box and looked at Mr. Larrap with concentrated rage. That gentleman, however, regarded him with much equanimity.

"I want you to tell me, Mr. David Helbrod, something about your proceedings on the evening of Tuesday the eighth of October. You are a gentleman of dramatic tastes, and I believe that on that evening you went to the opera house?"

"I might ha' done."

"You and a companion of yours, John Kesterton, who is now in court, and who will be arrested if he tries to leave it—I see him trembling over there—went to the theatre, having been paid \$5 each to hiss Mdllé. Solferino, I think?"

"That's got nothing to do with this 'ere case," said Helbrod, defiantly.

"Oh, yes it has. On that occasion you were put out of the gallery of the theatre by main force by a certain young man, in fact by my client, Mr. Kingstone, whom you falsely accused. You don't deny it, Mr. Helbrod, it would be no use if you did. On that occasion, you and your companion, John Kesterton, were heard to say that you would 'get even' with Mr. Kingstone. Again I say to you that if you deny this it will be no good to you, and you'll be running your neck into the noose of perjury, but I give you the chance; deny it if you can."

"I ain't goin' to say nothin'," said Helbrod, doggedly.

"You don't deny it. Quite right—you do wisely."

Mr. Larrap sat down and began to look over his papers.

Mr. Pottsie was on his feet in an instant.

"I don't see, your Honor, that any learned gentleman, whatever his experience, should be able to bull-doze a court of justice. I stand just on the same ground as Mr. Larrap, and will not give way an inch. He may think before I'm through with this case that he need not have tried his cheap sarcasm with the idea of getting a little applause from the gallery. Call John Kesterton!"

"John Kesterton!" called the sergeant, at the same time hustling that trembling, white-faced man into the witness-box.

He was duly sworn.

"Your name is John Kesterton?" said Mr. Pottsie.

"Yes, it is, and I aren't goin' to say nothin'."

"Oh, that's all nonsense, you know. What is your trade?"

"I aren't goin' to say nothin', I tell yer."

"Another choice witness," said Mr. Larrap, in an undertone.

"If you don't answer questions I shall order

you into custody till you do," said the magistrate to the witness.

"I aren't goin' to say nothin'," was the response.

"Take this man and lock him in a cell," said the magistrate to the sergeant of police.

There was a slight hubbub at this point, as Jack Kesterton, as strong as he was stupid, did not apparently like the idea of being taken into custody. Two policemen, however, soon convinced him that discretion was the better part of valor, and when he had been removed, the magistrate asked Mr. Pottsie if he had any more witnesses to call.

"Yes, your Honor, I have—call John Halleck."

John Halleck, the detective, did not want much calling. He was speedily in the witness-box, and he was as rapidly sworn. Mr. Pottsie breathed freely again. Here was a witness respecting whom there could be no doubt.

"Your name is John Halleck?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you are a detective, I think?"

"I am, sir," said Halleck, unconsciously drawing himself to his full height and feeling every inch of it.

"Tell us what you know about this case, Mr. Halleck," said Mr. Pottsie.

"I was sent for by the Employers' Association to keep an eye on the strikers in this city, as it was supposed there might be trouble. In the course of my duties, from information received, I found that meetings of disaffected labor men were being held at the Wolf Inn. I took up lodgings there, and became acquainted with Helbrod and the witness, Kesterton, who has just been taken down. From them I ascertained the connection of the prisoner, Kingstone, with the crime of burning down the Vaughn mansion."

"What sort of meetings were taking place at the Wolf?" said the magistrate.

"Oh, they were ordinary jollifications, your Honor."

"How do you connect Mr. Kingstone with the burning of the Vaughn mansion?"

"From information received, I was on watch at the Wolf Inn on the Tuesday evening previous to the fire, as I believed that it was Kingstone's intention to burn the Vaughn residence and leave it to be supposed that the labor men had done it. For this reason he was anxious to know what the men who were meeting at the Wolf were saying. He concealed himself in the loft over the room in which the meeting was held. I tried to arrest him in the act of escaping, but he got clear and ran away. However, I found this riding whip, with his name on it, in the loft.

and I think that is pretty good evidence he was there." He held up Fritz's riding crop.

"Interrupting the witness for a moment, your Honor," said Mr. Larrap, "I must request that he confine himself to evidence, and not give merely his own opinions."

"Go on, Mr. Halleck, you need not mind these cavilling remarks," said Mr. Pottsie.

"Your evidence is not quite clear, witness," said the magistrate. "How do you connect Kingstone with the fire?"

"I am coming to it, your Honor. On the night I discovered a handkerchief filled with combustible material and tied up in a bundle. There was a piece of sacking, soaked in coal oil, and some chopped kindling cut from a pine board. They were placed on a shelf above the stall in the Herkimer House stables, where the prisoner always stables his horse when he comes to the city. I employed John Kesterton, the witness who refused to speak, to watch this bundle, and he saw—"

"Don't tell us what he saw, keep to your own evidence," said the magistrate.

"This hampers me, your Honor, and I trust you will excuse me, but with the link of Kesterton's evidence missing, it is hard to make up the chain."

"You bet it is," said Mr. Larrap, under his breath.

"Go on, Halleck," said Mr. Pottsie.

"On the night of the conflagration I found the red handkerchief outside the cellar window of the Vaughn mansion. The window had been forced open and a quantity of loose straw or some other combustible material thrown in and set on fire. A piece of the kindling with which the fire was started and also a small piece of sack-ing I found outside, along with the red handkerchief. I was present at the fire and saw the prisoner in a state of great agitation, making enquiries as to whether Miss Vaughn was safe. He had come in on horseback, for he had a riding switch in his hand. From the terror in his face, his heart evidently misgave him after he had done the dreadful deed, and the consequences of it came upon him. On the following day I arrested the prisoner on a warrant, and found on his farm premises the sack from which the piece in the red handkerchief had been cut, and also the pine board of exactly similar material to the chips with which the fire was started. I herewith produce them."

A hush fell over the court as these articles were handed over and laid on the table.

"Call Police Constable Jones," said Mr. Pottsie.

Constable Jones was sworn, and stated that Fritz Kingstone, on the night of the fire, asked him in an agonized voice if Miss Vaughn was safe. On his telling the prisoner that both she and her father were safe, he went away quietly.

"That is my case, your Honor, and I ask that the prisoner be committed for trial."

CHAPTER XIX.

"HAS the defence anything to bring forward?" said the magistrate.

"I have to ask your Honor," said Mr. Larrap, "that my client be allowed to testify in his own defence."

"Certainly!" said the magistrate.

An official of the court gave Fritz the Testament as he stood in the dock, and recited to him the words of the oath, after which our hero reverently kissed the book.

Then, in a clear voice, and with a plain, straightforward manner, Fritz told his story. He told how on the Sunday evening on which this tale opens, he had listened to Helbrod's threats in the hotel, and had afterwards overheard him and his companion make an appointment to meet at the Wolf Inn on the following Tuesday night. He told how on the Monday evening he had assisted to turn out the two disturbers from the opera house, and the threats they had uttered against him. He narrated his plans for hearing what was done at the meeting at the Wolf, and what took place there. In fact, he gave a clear and unvarnished report of all

his proceedings during the time covered by the present story, with all of which the reader is familiar.

"What about the red handkerchief bundle?" said Mr. Larrap as a reminder.

Fritz told how Helbrod had produced a similar bundle, and how he had drunkenly said that "That was the thing that was going to do it." He said that he had come to the conclusion, after that meeting, that the threats of the men to burn the Vaughn residence were mere drunken boastings and that nothing would come of it. His presence at the fire was natural, as Miss Vaughn was a young lady for whom he had great admiration, though he had never breathed a word of the kind attributed to him by Helbrod. In conclusion, he spoke of having seen Helbrod, on the night of the meeting, going along the road, followed by his son Tom, and of his own sudden flight from the back premises of the Wolf Inn.

"Did you go to the Herkimer House stables on the night of the fire?" asked Mr. Larrap.

"No, I did not," said Fritz.

"Call Tom Helbrod," said Mr. Larrap.

"This is the son of the former witness, Helbrod, your Honor—or rather his step-son," Mr. Larrap continued, when the boy had been duly sworn. "Now, Tom, I think you have been treated rather badly by your step-father?"

"Yes, sir, I have; he kicks me and knocks me about."

"And Mr. Kingstone has been kind to you?"

"Yes, sir, he have."

"On Tuesday, the fifteenth of October, your step-father gave you a thrashing?"

"Yes, sir, he did."

"How do you fix the date?" said the magistrate.

"I sell papers, y'r Honor, and when I was looking the paper over on that day to see what to call out, I seed a bit where a boy had been beat to death by his step-father, and I thinks to myself that's like me, an' I kep the paper—here it is, y'r Honor—and the man got ten years for manslaughter."

"All right, that 'll do," said the magistrate.

"Well, on that Tuesday night you did a bit of detective business, didn't you?" said Mr. Larrap to Tom.

"Yes, sir, I followed the old man."

"You mean your step-father?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did you follow him 'for?"

"To see if I could get anythin' agin him, so's he could be put in quod."

"Well, go on."

"I tracked him to Mr. Kingstone's farm. He went in there and across to the wood-house. The

folks inside the house was playin' on the organ and singin' like. So dad lights his dark-lantern—leastways mine."

"How yours?"

"Well, sir, I bought it with my own money, me havin' read about Flyin' Dick—he had a dark lantern, so I thought I'd get one. And dad stole it from me and said I hadn't ought to have it.

"Well, he lighted the lantern, and arter a while I seen him comin' out, so I sneaked away, so as he shouldn't see me. Next morning I seen a bundle tied up in a red handkerchief on a shelf in our shed at home. And I opens it an' sees chips and sackin' soaked in coal ile. I thought he was a-going to start ingin-drivin' agen, and these wos to light the fire under the biler."

"Well, what then?"

"I watched the old man, and next arternoon I seen him take the bundle. I sneaked arter him and seen him put it on the shelf in the table at the Herkimer House."

"And then you cut away?" said the magistrate.

"Yes, sir, I did."

"Call Mrs. Anderson!" said Mr. Larrap.

The friend of Fritz's mother soon made her appearance, a little flurried, perhaps, by having to appear in a police court, but at the same time

quite ready to do her part. Mrs. Anderson, being duly sworn, testified that she was at the Kingstone farm the whole of the day on the night of which the conflagration took place, and that Fritz Kingstone remained at home all the time until she retired to rest at half-past ten.

The chief of the fire brigade testified that the alarm from the Vaughn residence rang in at 10.45 p.m.

"I submit, your Honor, that there is no shadow of a case against my client, and I ask that the charge against him be dismissed."

"The case is dismissed. Mr. Larrap, and Mr. Kingstone will leave the dock without a stain upon his character. He comes of a good family, and I feel sure that he will carry out in his life the high principles of his father and mother. Mr. Kingstone, you have my best wishes for your future success and happiness."

Applause broke out over the court, which was instantly checked by the officials. Kingstone left the dock, and was warmly shaken by the hand by his counsel, Mr. Larrap. As for Mr. Pottsie, his face displayed a confused vexation that was in strange contrast to his former conceited assurance. Halleck, the detective, displayed his annoyance by biting his nails savagely.

The trial of Fritz being over, there was an immediate rush of many persons from the court,

but the attention of those who stayed was at once attracted by four or five policemen who came up the steps leading from the cells, bringing along with them no fewer than seven men, who were handcuffed together. These they pushed into the dock, thereby making that receptacle of accused persons look rather crowded.

As these sullen prisoners faced the magistrate, it was seen that the erstwhile witness, Dave Helbrod, was among them, also John Kesterton, who had refused to speak. There also gleamed the beady eyes of the chairman at the meetings at the Wolf Inn, and the man who had kept the door. These and three others were the seven who were the real conspirators to burn down the Vaughn residence.

Halleck, the detective, bit his nails with a still fiercer vexation.

"What is the charge against these men?" said the magistrate.

"I appear for the prosecution in this case, your Worship," said Mr. Larrap, rising, and, after submitting to you the evidence of Fritz Kingstone, I shall ask that the prisoners be remanded for one week in order that further evidence may be secured. I charge these men with conspiring together to burn down the Vaughn residence, and I charge Dave Helbrod, one of them, with perjury also. Mr. Kingstone, oblige me by stepping into the witness-box."

Fritz obeyed, and having been again sworn, he recapitulated what he had witnessed at the meetings at the Wolf. At the close of his evidence the men were immediately remanded for one week, and marched to the cells below.

"Perhaps my learned friend, Mr. Pottsie, will undertake the defence of these men," said Mr. Larrap.

"I wash my hands of the case!" said Mr. Pottsie, pettishly.

One of the reasons why the tables had been so suddenly turned was the fact that the local chief of police had been rather irritated by the airs put on by Detective Halleck, and he had resolved to show that ambitious man that he was not quite so wise as he appeared. Accordingly, as soon as Mr. Larrap had informed him of the evidence given by Fritz, he and his men had worked night and day to round up the conspirators, with the successful result already narrated.

CHAPTER XX.

Six years have passed since the events recorded in the last chapter, and it is now only necessary to draw together the various threads that have gone to the weaving of this simple story.

The city has grown and developed during that time beyond the wildest dreams of the pioneers, but the burning of the Vaughn mansion still stands out as an important event in its annals. As there was an adequate amount of insurance on the edifice, the conflagration occasioned but a temporary inconvenience to Mr. Vaughn. He and his daughter went to live at the principal hotel while the rebuilding operations were going on. It was a year and a half before they were completed, and the refurnishing and decoration finished. A double wedding celebrated the event, the grandest ever known in the province. The contracting parties were Mr. Vaughn and Mdle. Solferino, and Vernon and Lily Vaughn. Both marriages turned out happily. While the new Mrs. Vaughn spends her husband's money with a lavish hand, she does not forget the poor and unfortunate, for she remembers the pinching days

of her early youth. Vernon and his wife are a devoted couple, and their two children—a girl and a boy—are the prettiest in the city. Mrs. Vernon has had a great influence on her husband, for as her own enlarging sympathies have taken in a continually widening circle, she has been able to enlist him as an ally in her work of making other people happier.

The trial of the Wolf Inn conspirators for the burning of the Vaughn mansion is still remembered as a *cause célèbre*. It resulted in varying terms of imprisonment for the seven men accused, and Dave Helbrod and Jack Kesterton are still in the penitentiary. The Wolf Inn itself has been replaced by a handsome hotel, for a vigorous suburban village has arisen on the prairie around the spot on which it stood, so that its clapboard sides and ruinous outbuildings are now only a memory to the older inhabitants.

Fritz is now twenty-five years old, and a fine, strong, hearty fellow he is. He did not know until the excitement of his great trial was over how much demand it had made on his young vitality, and for a year or more he felt very much sobered by the experience, during which, it need not be said, he was the cause of much anxious solicitude on the part of his mother. For when the stirring events of the fire and the subsequent trials were over, and Mrs. Anderson

and her niece had gone to live with friends a day's journey away, life at the farm seemed to take on a certain emptiness. Fritz could not keep the image of Lily Vaughn out of his mind, and though he knew she could not be his, the occasional sight of her on the prairie or in the city, or when she called on his mother, as she did a time or two, set his heart beating and made the blood leave his face. To fill his mind with other ideas, he determined to take a course of evening lessons at the business college in the city, and during the time he spent there he was a most devoted student. But it was in music that he found a solace and relief that elsewhere, for a time at least, seemed to be denied to him. Opening the old harmonium one day, he began the task of teaching himself to master its difficulties, and though it was slow work, he persevered, to the great delight of his mother, who said that he inherited his father's gift. A few lessons perfected what he had begun, and now, as we draw near the Kingstone farm, we hear the beautiful phrases of one of Handel's symphonies floating out through the open window. Let us draw a little nearer and look in, though we will remain unseen. It seems there are visitors to-day, and as we draw closer we hear the sharp tones of Mrs. Anderson, and the softer ones of Jean McPherson.

"Why, you play very well, indeed," says Jean; "you play very much better than I do."

"I want you to come out in the front and see a rose tree I planted when you were here six years ago," said Fritz, pleasantly. The two young people come out together.

"Why, how beautifully it has grown—I would not have believed it. Of course, you protect it in the winter."

"Oh, yes, very carefully—I tie it up in straw."

"What is the name of it?" asks Jean, innocently.

"I call it the Jean McPherson," says Fritz. "But I want to change its name to Jean Kingstone."

Jean darts a timid glance at his face as he takes both her hands into his own, and says, "Yes, Jean, dear, I want you to be my own precious rose."

"Thorns and all?" she says mischievously.

"Yes, thorns and all, if you like, but I don't think you have many, my dearest."